NARRATIVE AND GENDER IN THE NOVELS OF CHRISTINA STEAD

Wendy Vilma Woodward

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To women in their stuggle against oppression

in language and in life

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PREFACE

Our lives are constituted by narrative, by ongoing attempts to tell our stories and listen to the legends of other lives. My childhood, like that of Christina Stead, was informed by stories and myths. Told to me by my father and read to me by my mother, they were usually informed by masculist traditions of children's literature.

I needed other stories. Years later I discovered Emily Brontë, Olive Schreiner, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and Virginia Woolf. Their narratives told of women's desires and their punishment for transgressing accepted norms. I understood those stories, but I needed a framework for reading them which neither new critical practice nor literary theory provided.

Not until feminist literary criticism began to ratify readings of narratives by women, while taking cognizance of form as ideologically significant, did criticism begin to tell precisely how women writers narrated their stories. Christina Stead's narratives, difficult to encounter for the first time, responded to such a reading and I felt able, with these tools, to add to a critical understanding of her novels.

Ironically, in learning new ways to read a woman's (and other women's) narratives I have had to isolate myself in Cape Town from women whose lives tell Gothic tales of sexist and racist oppression. Within the struggle for change in this country the women's struggle also continues, silenced and censored. The issues of power and language are not isolatedly academic.

The story of this dissertation has been one of personal struggle, but I should like to thank many friends and colleagues who have helped to ameliorate its repetitious narrative: Claire Breen, Chris Breen, Julia Martin, Mike Cope, Dr Jenny Penberthy, Angela Schaffer, and Paulla Ebron have been of immense support. Christopher Wildman has helped me at close quarters by sharing many hours of my text. Dr Dorothy Driver, Dr Nick Visser, Kay McCormick, and Dr Gail Fincham all gave time to reading parts of the dissertation. Dr Ian Glenn has been a rigorous and energetic supervisor. Dr Teresa Dovey, Alan Lawson, and Susan Gardner sent me material from Australia. Mariss Stevens has coped, always calmly, with drafts and re-drafts.

I should like to thank the English Department of the University of Cape Town who have shown faith in my project by renewing my Junior Research Fellowship and for granting me a Postgraduate Research Scholarship in 1985. I am grateful, too, to the Human Sciences Research Council for their generous bursary in 1986.

An earlier draft of the theoretical section of chapter one entitled "Writing Differences and the Ideology of Form: Narrative Structure in the Novels of Christina Stead" has been published in Theoria 68 (1986): 49-58 and a condensed version of chapter three entitled "The Natural Outlawry of Womankind: Four Artists in the Novels of Christina Stead" has been accepted for publication by Journal of Literary Studies (forthcoming) for a special edition focusing on gender studies.

NARRATIVE AND GENDER IN THE NOVELS OF CHRISTINA STEAD

WOODWARD, Wendy Vilma, Ph.D. University of Cape Town, 1987.

This dissertation locates Christina Stead as a woman writer, who interrogates, both mimetically and poetically, the ideology of the dominant literary tradition. Because the formal narrative strategies, subtexts, and repressed discourses reveal inscriptions of Christina Stead's gender, the issues of language and power are central.

A humanist feminist who anticipates a close bond between reader and text fails to overcome the problem of those narrative modes which alienate the readers of Stead's novels. Only a textual feminist who foregrounds the ideology of form recognizes that Stead's methods are dislocating in order to produce a reader who participates in the narrative process itself.

For Stead, both women and men are entrapped within the prison-house of language, which becomes the locus of power struggles. The embedded artworks of four women artists, speak and write against the realism of the dominant discourse in the women's desires to assert their own sexuality, to postpone death, to connect with maternal figures, and to undermine androcentrism. These women, and others in Stead's canon, speak their difference. Male genderlects, however, attest to their dominance, endorsing an ideology of oppression in their competitiveness, their narcissism, and their theorizing.

Christina Stead, herself, like the women artists she depicts, uses metaphor variously. She has metaphor convey the sexuality of the female characters and subvert the metaphorical

commonplaces of the dominant tradition. Other metaphors reveal transcendent impulses, seemingly at odds with the narratives' usual deterministic ethos.

In the plots and their endings Christina Stead also negotiates with the norms of the dominant literature. The formal structures correlate with the patterns of the characters' lives either in Bildungsromanen or in novels of repetition which metonymize deathly compulsions.

Thus a reading which foregrounds narrative and gender, particularly in the embedded artworks, genderlects, metaphor, plot and closure, depicts a Christina Stead who has never been comprehended by masculist critics who fail to take cognizance of the woman writer's desires to combat the dominant literary tradition.

Chapter One

Christina Stead, the Critics, and the Woman Writer

Biography and critical response

Christina Stead was born in Sydney, Australia, in July 1902. Her childhood resembled that of Louisa Pollit in The Man Who Loved Children. Stead's mother died when she was two years old and her father, like Sam Pollit a naturalist and icthyologist, remarried, soon engendering a family of six, which the young Christina helped to bring up. She trained for a teaching career, but because her voice failed, she did clerical work until she left Sydney in 1928 for England, having lived through privations, like Teresa Hawkins in For Love Alone, in order to save money. Her health suffered so greatly in London from her continued economizing that she believed she was about to die and considered her first novel, Seven Poor Men of Sydney, as "something to leave behind." William Blake, whom Stead later married, submitted the manuscript, without her knowledge, to Sylvia Beach, who approved of it and suggested finding an agent. Subsequently, Peter Davies agreed to publish the novel, providing he had another book. Stead wrote The Salzburg Tales and both were published in 1934.

The Blakes lived a peripatetic social existence. In Spain at the outbreak of the Civil War, they moved rather hastily to France, where House of All Nations was written. (The Beauties and Furies had been published in 1936.) They lived in the United States for ten years, mainly in New York, but with a brief, unhappy spell in Hollywood where Stead attempted script writing.

She wrote reviews for New Masses and The Left Review and during those years The Man Who Loved Children (1940), For Love Alone (1944), Modern Women in Love (1945) an anthology of fiction edited with William Blake, and Letty Fox: Her Luck (1946) were published. The last book was a best-seller there, but banned in Australia for what was considered its licentiousness.

The years 1947 to 1953 were spent in Europe with some time in England, where they again lived from 1953, William Blake until his death in 1968, Christina Stead until her return to Australia six years later. In 1948 A Little Tea, A Little Chat was published and in 1952 The People with the Dogs, but subsequently, until 1966, Stead published no new novels, though she translated books from French and compiled the selection Great Stories of the South Sea Islands (1955). After her husband's death, Stead visited the Australian National University in Canberra in 1969 as a Creative Arts Fellow, and in 1967 Cotters' England and The Puzzleheaded Girl were published.

In 1974 Stead returned to Australia where she received the Patrick White Novel Award. Earlier, she had been disqualified from winning the ten thousand dollar Encyclopaedia Britannica Award because she was, allegedly, not an Australian. In her essay on Seven Poor Men of Sydney Dorothy Green suggested caustically that Stead became known in 1967 because of the award being refused: "To miss the chance of winning $10,000 is news; to write a good book is not" (151). In 1973 The Little Hotel was published and in 1976, the year of Stead's death, Miss Herbert

(The Suburban Wife).[1]

Critics at the time of the novels' publications were divided about whether Stead's writing was "good" or not. The poets William Plomer and Edwin Muir both celebrated Seven Poor Men of Sydney as a work of genius. "Not an easy world, but not a negligible one; and Miss Stead is not an easy writer, but a powerful one" (972), Plomer believed. In Australia the critical reception was mixed, even hostile. In 1938 in Essays in Australian Fiction M. Barnard Eldershaw (Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw) praised Seven Poor Men of Sydney and the fantasy and "richness" of The Salzburg Tales, but found fault with The Beauties and Furies. Not only did it fail "helplessly" because the characters were "sawdust puppets" (159), but "beyond the story and its ornaments" they could find no political significance after the "developing social outlook" of the earlier novel (181). Miles Franklin considered Seven Poor Men of Sydney as "a very big toad plumped into our backyard puddle" (quoted in John Barnes' essay, 61), castigating Stead for playing to Bloomsbury. John O'Donnell in 1946 complained similarly about Stead's lack of political message, considering her genius as "confined" because she did not portray "a cross section of social reality" (n.p.). Stead's writing, of course, did not conform to the social realism characteristic of most Australian fiction. Perhaps this could explain, partly, why none of her novels were ever published in her native country until 1965.

[1] Sources for biographical information on Stead have been various: interviews, her own articles, and full-length studies by Joan Lidoff and R. G. Geering.

Generally, reviewers in newspapers and magazines also had difficulty with Stead's novels. In 1936, J. D. Beresford, the Manchester Guardian reviewer of The Beauties and Furies, voiced his violent antagonism to Stead's cleverness. The anonymous New Yorker reviewer of The Man Who Loved Children in "Christina Stead Continues" seemed uncomfortable about locating Stead within his or her prejudices. "Like Emily Brontë, she has none of the proper bearing, the reassuring domestic countenance of a 'local author.'" Yet the same reviewer was prepared to predict that "the sheer originality, weight and conscientiousness of her talent will sooner or later win her a place among the acknowledged leaders of her generation" (84). This reviewer, like others, also took exception to the un-Americanness of the Pollits. John Barkham, in 1952, rather petulantly objects to The People with the Dogs in a similar vein. He classified Stead as a "visitor" to the United States, who depicted the "talkingest bunch" of people, while he found most visitors impressed by "our energy and restlessness" (4). Barbara Giles in New Masses objected to Stead having Letty, the "play radical," as a central character without at least "one genuine communist" in contrast (24).

That Stead always disclaimed labels is understandable against this background of critics who castigated her in such sectarian ways for not aligning her novels with their particular ideology. Yet Stead has always been admired by other writers. Lillian Hellman believed that Stead deserved the Nobel Prize for Literature; Saul Bellow, when he received that prize in 1976, felt the same, as Joan Lidoff noted in her volume on Christina

Stead (1). Elizabeth Hardwick found all of her work to be of a unique power. Angela Carter, in an interview with John Mortimer in In Character, ranked Stead with Conrad (46). Rebecca West, John Updike, and Randall Jarrell are among her other champions.

These writers were certainly more perceptive than the reviewers who denigrated Stead's writing or failed to understand her narratives. The Australian reading public who might have wished to judge for themselves found this difficult as none of Stead's novels were published there until 1965. Then the Australian republication of The Salzburg Tales, Seven Poor Men of Sydney, For Love Alone and The Man Who Loved Children brought about a rediscovery of her work. Subsequently, Virago's publication of all the novels (except Seven Poor Men of Sydney, The Man Who Loved Children, The Little Hotel and House of All Nations which are, nevertheless, in print) has meant that Stead's canon is now accessible for an international reading public. Most recently, her hitherto unpublished novel, I'm Dying Laughing, is to be brought out by Virago in March 1987. The ready availability of all of Stead's writing has resulted in a burgeoning in Stead criticism since the mid-1960's. Various approaches are discernible in these assessments: the placing of her work socio-historically within an Australian literary tradition, the foregrounding of her life in interviews and biographical readings, the commentating of a general nature which seems to eschew ideology, the emphasizing of form or the psychological aspects of the narrative, and, what is most pertinent to this dissertation, the consideration of Stead as a woman writer.

Both R. G. Geering and Joan Lidoff have written general introductions to Christina Stead. If the former's volume in the Twayne's World Author Series is somewhat stolid, it provides a necessary basic introduction to Stead's life and work since the early 1960's. R. G. Geering has also written a number of articles on Stead that have brought her to the attention of critics and, it is hoped, to that of the general reading public. That his articles, monograph, and volume had to serve introductory purposes would explain why most of his literary analysis is basic and often plot summary, yet he does offer some particularized insights, for example when he notices (in 1968) that none of the critics has taken cognizance of Nellie Cotter's lesbianism in Cotters' England.

Joan Lidoff's more recent study of Christina Stead is also hampered by the need to introduce Stead once again, yet her analysis of the works is more substantial than Geering's and informed by the ideological issue of gender. Lidoff, very usefully, also gives compelling reasons for reading Stead within a feminist framework even though the writer, herself, was antagonistic to that idea. (It is a pity, though, that this information was incorporated in a footnote.)

Amongst those critics of the socio-historical approach possibly the most elucidating is Ian Reid who discusses how "the woman problem" was ignored because of the immediately more pressing economic problems of Australia between 1930 and 1950. John Barnes's 1967 essay on "Australian Books in Print" is useful in his tracing of "provincial hostility" to experimental writing and in his judgement of Seven Poor Men of Sydney along with

Kenneth Mackenzie's The Young Desire It and Patrick White's Happy Valley as "the real foundations of the modern novel in Australia" (61). Diana Brydon explains Christina Stead as an Australian writer caught between the traditions of vitalism and utopianism, while T. Inglis Moore in his discussion of Social Patterns in Australian Literature barely mentions Stead apart from considering her as "profoundly humanist" (316) and her first novel as "a strange meteor" (141). Both D. R. Burns and Harry P. Heseltine are too narrow in their socio-historical placing of Stead. The former traces the "violence of feeling and thought" in Seven Poor Men of Sydney and For Love Alone (79-87), and the latter is preoccupied with Michael Baguenault, in Stead's first novel, because he is "acquainted with the night." Heseltine's foregrounding of Michael means that the critic regards women characters only in relation to the male. Either they are alter egos or mythic signifiers. Still, he records how daring Stead was at the time in her treatment of Catherine's madness and in her depiction of incest as a possibly detrimental social prohibition. William Dean judges Seven Poor Men of Sydney as a departure from the Australian romantic tradition because of its concentration on the urban environment and Brian Kiernan is particularly informative about Stead's presentation of nature and the city, looking specifically at how natural elements suggest psychological metaphors of sexual liberation for Teresa Hawkins in For Love Alone.

The biographical essays on Christina Stead tend to be interviews, such as those with John B. Beston, Giula Giuffré, Anne Whitehead, Michael Wilding, Rodney Wetherell, and Graeme

Kinross-Smith, rather than actual biographical readings of her works. These interviews, as well as that conducted by Joan Lidoff, and included in her full-length study, reveal Stead as a personable, articulate, even relaxed interviewee whose asseverations about her writing do not always coalesce. Repeatedly, however, she describes herself as a socialist or leftist, but strongly resists the label "feminist," because (as she admits to Giula Giuffré) it is a label and because "they go to very unpleasant extremes, some of them" (24).

In this same interview Stead downplayed any ambition of hers to be a writer, and described her ambition as "to love," yet goes on to admit: "writing is creative, loving is creative. It's exactly the same" (22). Stead maintained that she never thought of writing as her career and denied any significance to the unproductive period between 1952 and 1966. Stead seemed to need to discount any notion of her self as a writer conscious of form. She told Giuffré that she never did any revision; yet, to Joan Lidoff, she conceded that she revised everything she ever wrote except for House of All Nations (195). Stead repeatedly maintained that, like her father, she was a naturalist and merely recorded what she saw. Dorothy Green in her obituary of Stead noted that her "business was to observe" as though all observation is "scientific" and immune from any ideological view.

Too often Stead's observations about her writing or biographical details of her life are used to inform criticism which, for want of a better term, I can only label as "generalist," in that it seems, often, not to recognize the formal aspects of the text, and to be commentary rather than

analysis. Repeatedly these critics conflate the text and life: Rodney Pybus describes the act of reading Cotters' England as an act of living; K. G. Hamilton finds The People with the Dogs uncomfortable because it is too much like life and lacking in order; Clement Semmler wants realism and is determined to relate the texts to the life even seeing strong parallels between Nellie Cotter and Christina Stead because they share "puzzleheadedness," radical views, and a "consuming sense of vitality" (485-86).

Alternatively, essays like those of Robert Fagan, Tony Thomas or James Walt may make some important points but then they lapse into summary or act as general introductions. On the other hand, Don Anderson's essay on Christina Stead's "Unforgettable Dinner Parties" is substantial and moves beyond its narrow title, and Veronica Brady's presentation of Christina Stead as a prophetic writer in The Man Who Loved Children, which she regards as depicting the ancient organic sense of the world, opens up the narrative rather than tying it down to a petulant complaint about what it is or is not.

Implicit in most of these essays is the belief that Stead is a character writer without any genius for narrative, yet she, herself, always emphasized the act of narration and her composing of stories as a child ("Ocean of Story"). Jennifer McDonnell on The Man Who Loved Children finds that Stead introduces "more and more disturbing and unresolvable subject matter" which she considers a "weakness in narration" (404). Lorna Tracy on The Salzburg Tales emphasizes Christina Stead's characterization rather than form, but quotes Stead, herself, in the 1940s: "'The essence of style in literature for me is experiment, invention,

"creative error" (Jules Romains), and change'" (53).

Worth documenting under the "generalist" discussion is how the masculist critics' antagonism towards or neglect of women characters skews their analysis. Anthony Miller misjudges Seven Poor Men of Sydney by discounting Catherine as a central figure, for he considers Michael's death the climax, and the fifty "anti-climactic" pages that ensue a structural weakness. Grant McGregor on the same novel views Mae Graham as "a daytime succuba, seducing Michael into a materialism as soul-destroying as his own" (385) rather than as an economically pressed woman. In addition, he denies that Catherine's "innumerable passions" for intellectual men can encompass the sexual because he never finds Catherine "a desirable or even plausible sex object" (390). R. V. Cassill, in reviewing The Puzzleheaded Girl, felt that the male reader of "The Dianas" desired to "grab the vixen and backhand her teeth down her throat" (24).

Some of the more recent criticism has taken cognizance of narrative form. Rudolf Bader traces the genre of Bildungsroman in three of Stead's novels. In "Form and Expectation in Christina Stead's Novellas" Ian Reid regards style as self-referential in the novellas and finds the images in "The Rightangled Creek" as "a formal correlative" to the narrative structure. Bruce Holmes, in one of the few substantial analyses of text and language, elucidates the contradictions in House of All Nations. Other well argued analyses are those of Dorothy Green, Ken Stewart and Shirley Walker all of whom consider The Man Who Loved Children and, more variously, its differing discourses and use of metaphor. Walker, in particular, focuses

on Christina Stead's consciousness of form and notes how the world views of the characters legislate their language. Margot Horne and Pauline Nestor also note the style and metaphor, respectively, of the novel. Terry Sturm considers that Stead has actually devised a new mode of realism informed by a character's experience. He regards her as being too political for the assumptions of bourgeois realism and too individualist for the viewpoint of socialist realism, which might explain partially the difficulty critics have had in categorizing her.

So many critics stress the significance of Stead's characterization, yet few actually analyse these characters in any psychological depth. Although Alfred Katz's essay on The Man Who Loved Children is entitled "Some Psychological Themes in a Novel by Christina Stead," the content is too simplistic. Barely engaging with the multivalent issues of the novel, he fails even to give any psychological framework. Similarly, Robert Boyers' "The Family Novel" neglects to analyse the family romance or even place Henny in the family struggle. Joan Lidoff in "Home is Where the Heart is: The Fiction of Christina Stead" is far more provocative in her consideration that The Man Who Loved Children depicts what R. D. Laing calls "the internalized family." Graham Burns believes that Stead writes with a pyschologist's instinct and shows some psychological insight himself in his analysis of The Man Who Loved Children.

One needs to turn to criticism that takes cognizance of Stead as a woman writer for essays of greater psychological analysis. Such criticism reads Stead's characterization of women sociologically, and considers the issues of language and power.

Pamela Law found that reading Letty Fox: Her Luck as a novel about the processes of socialization rather than one of individual experience was more profitable. Laurie Clancy in "The Economy of Love: Christina Stead's Women" traces the twin themes of love and money and how Stead's female characters become less idealistic after Teresa. Judith Kegan Gardiner in her review essay of Dark Places of the Heart, the American title for Cotters' England, foregrounds Stead's characterization of women and points out how Miss Herbert (The Suburban Wife) plays with genres.

Dorothy Jones's analysis of how women writers use nature either as a place of exile or as a source of power and energy provides a more apposite reading of Stead's use of nature than that of the earlier critics I cited in this regard. Jones proffers a reading of "The Rightangled Creek" that relates the significance of the natural fecundity to the exploited women characters. Dorothy Green, as early as 1968, made more sense of Seven Poor Men of Sydney than any other critics. She reads the novel as "a lyric cry in novel form" (153), as the personal meditation and spiritual autobiography of Catherine, while taking cognizance of the reader's response. Frances M. Malpezzi, who portrays Louisa Pollit as a potential artist stultified by her acquiescent passivity, speculates why there is no Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman and concludes that the domestic role women have played has obviated such fiction.

Malpezzi's approach may be somewhat narrowly sociological, but other feminist critics have taken note of issues of language as well as the thematization of women's oppression in Stead's

canon. Jennifer Strauss notes how Stead plays with genre in For Love Alone and Susan Higgins reads the novel as an ironic commentary on Teresa's idealism. Joan Lidoff, in a particularly illuminating essay, considers how Stead transforms women's rage in The Man Who Loved Children in an "aesthetically productive way." Lidoff regards Stead as sharing with Henny and Louisa the legacy of feminine self-hatred that turns anger inward and projects violent fantasies onto the world (211-12). In psychoanalysing narrative form in terms of Stead as a woman writer, Lidoff subverts an arid narrative theoretical approach that leaves out gender. Susan Sheridan's substantial essay on The Man Who Loved Children opens up the novel psychoanalytically in terms of the "Patriarchal Family Drama" in her discussion of sexuality, adolescent crisis, and incest, and calls attention to the language of the novel which is constituted by "the battle of discourses." Lorna Sage's essay stresses the "passionate craftsmanship" of Christina Stead, yet she tends to explore the characterization of Teresa and the theme of love, rather than analysing this language. Marilou B. McLaughlin, like Susan Sheridan, examines the sexual politics of The Man Who Loved Children, and Kay Iseman, in her essay on the same novel, notes the marked difference in the fiction of women writers between the world of men and the world of women. Possibly the most important work on Christina Stead in feminist terms, is still to come in the first full-length study of her life and work analysing her gender and class relations. Written by Diana Brydon it is to be published in March 1987 by Barnes and Noble.

Other critics who have placed Christina Stead within the

context of a woman writing have done so more socio-historically and have suggested reasons besides the difficulty of her texts for her critical neglect. Anne Summers, on the colonization of women in Australia, writes of the "systematic omission" of women from the highest achievements in any field and notes how the woman artist has always been judged as belonging to a separate and inferior sphere. Summers celebrates Stead for portraying women differently from the usual stereotypes of wives and mothers. Drusilla Modjeska in her book length study of Australian women writers between 1925 and 1945 believes that the fact "that the women of the thirties have been neglected, suppressed even, is highly political" (255), for writing, according to Modjeska, "remains as it has always been, an arena of ideological struggle" (255). Like many feminist critics she regards the work of these women writers as "an intervention into the dominant literary tradition" (255). Carole Ferrier, on the problem of filiation for Australian women writers, locates Stead within a community locally as well as universally. She notes how women's writing of the 1940's and 1950's depicted the death of the family and, in so doing, she provides an excellent analysis of themes and trends while positing a common anti-patriarchal consciousness.

Critical Issues

From this review of criticism my own emphasis will be obvious. I find approaches that take cognizance of narrative form and Stead as a woman writer the most productive in reaching an understanding and appreciation of Christina Stead's novels.

In this dissertation I shall use both these approaches in proposing a reading of Stead's novels that takes cognizance of her gender and its effects on narrative form as well as on the characterization of women. The philosophical underpinning of feminist criticism and a textual critical approach coalesces with that of the essays which locate Stead as a woman writer and while I would regard this dissertation as being inserted into this debate, I also see it as addressing problems that have not yet been engaged with to any great depth.

Readers have always found Stead's texts problematic because the reader has been kept at a distance from the represented story. The embedded artworks of the women artists have either been ignored or found to be peripheral or distracting. Complaints have been made about the endless dialogues between characters, and metaphor, on the whole, has been read traditionally, thus ignoring its complexity. The plots have been described as non-existent or static and endings have been largely ignored.

Reading Stead as a woman writer and regarding writing as "an arena of ideological struggle" (255), as Drusilla Modjeska puts it, elucidates these issues in Stead's oeuvre that most critics and reviewers have found problematic. I propose, in this dissertation, to engage with the significance of gender in narrative and to find solutions through a feminist reading that takes cognizance of the ideology of narrative form. Thus, in chapter two I shall explain the difficulty of the reading response by contrasting the expectations of the humanist feminist reader with the actual rigours of a split text. I shall argue that in dislocating the reader the texts make the reader more conscious

of the narrative process. Because she is unable to receive the novels as completed products the reader is encouraged to respond intellectually.

In chapter three I shall contextualize the embedded artworks within Stead's depiction of women artists and their desires. Christina Stead, obviously, is conscious of the position of women within a hostile symbolic. The texts which foreground a woman's difficulty in finding her voice do this through metafictional narrative strategies, through the female characters who attempt authorship and, more generally, through constant self-reflexive references to the writing of a novel which undermine the reader's immersion in the mimetic.

In chapter four I shall analyse the seemingly relentless dialogues of the characters in terms of language and power issues inherent in gender struggles. Stead, highly conscious of the cultural framework within which women are inserted, foregrounds gender differences in language by representing male and female genderlects as divisive, and oppressive, mainly, of the women: Catherine, having slashed her wrist in a self-sacrificial attempt to convey her love to Baruch quotes Nietzsche to him: "they are alien, so alien that they cannot even speak their difference to each other" (311).[2]

The narratives of the women artists, which I noted above,

[2] I would define genderlect as those dialects generally spoken by women marginalized within the male symbolic or by men empowered by it. K. K. Ruthven, in Feminist Literary Studies (103), attributes this term to Wayne Dickerson, cited in Cheris Kramer, "Women's Speech: Separate but Unequal?" Quarterly Journal of Speech 60 (1974): 14.

constitute a very different genderlect from that spoken by male characters, whose stories and anecdotes, never so intensely personal, occur in the metonymic (or realistic) mode. In chapter five I shall read metaphor as a subtext which reveals the particular reticences of a woman writer. Metaphor, variously, may become a vehicle for transcending a 'reality' that is phallocentric, for subverting dominant metaphorical practice, or for suggesting a character's sexuality.

I shall analyse the constructs of plot and closure as social commentary on the position of women in chapter six. Stead uses the Kunstlerroman genre in three of her novels--Seven Poor Men of Sydney, The Man Who Loved Children, and For Love Alone to render the lives of three putative women artists.[3] They show a developmental pattern as the female hero quests centrifugally and artistically. In Stead's other narratives, however, a circular, repetitious plot duplicates the pattern of women's stasis in the social formation.[4] The repetitious plot also suggests the stultification of capitalistic pursuits, engaged in most

3 A Kunstlerroman is a Bildungsroman of the artist. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers, Everywoman: Studies in History, Literature and Culture, ed. Susan Gubar and Joan Hoff-Wilson (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 84-104 discusses the significance of this genre for women.

4 The term "social formation" I take from Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice, New Accents Series, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Methuen, 1980) 5:

> Ideology in Althusser's use of the term, works in conjunction with political practice and economic practice to constitute the social formation, a formulation which promotes a more complex and radical analysis of social relations than the familiar term, 'society'. . . .

directly by certain male characters. Repetition, in all these novels, signifies the horror of a dearth of change.

That Stead is a woman writer is indisputable, but that she is a feminist is contentious. Repeatedly in interviews Stead belittled the "Women's Liberation" movement for being too political, too unconcerned with "ordinary women," and too extreme. She obviously equated the movement with what would now be termed liberal feminism, middle class, individualistic and indifferent to the working class, and with separatist feminism, anti-male, and homosexual in orientation. Stead's antagonism could be explained historically. In the 1930's, according to Susan Sheridan, in "Women, Writing and War: Looking Back on the 1930's," feminism had a bad name with both Marxists and liberals. Susan Higgins points to a fifty year ridicule of feminism, which became anathema to the generation reaching maturity in the post-suffrage period. Yet Stead, throughout her narratives, takes "by assumption rather than by argument, a position fundamental to philosophic feminism," to use Jennifer Strauss' words (87). Stead's more journalistic writing explicitly reveals feminist concerns. Her essay "About Woman's Insight There is a Sort of Folklore We Inherit" dismisses essentialist differences and her letter to Partisan Review in 1979 bemoans the "suburban loneliness" of women in the man-dominated family. In an interview with Joan Lidoff, Stead maintained "I am a woman, therefore I write a certain way about women" (208). Stead's lack of overt or acknowledged feminist ideology is insignificant in the face of such incontrovertible evidence--she is a woman; therefore she writes differently.

Women's difference

The ways that Stead, as a woman writer, writes differently from those in the dominant tradition constitutes the major area of inquiry of this dissertation. Shoshana Felman in "Women and Madness: The Critical Fallacy" considers the problem of difference as "the major theoretical challenge of all contemporary thought" (4). Considering women's difference has always involved placing women within an oppositional set, which has always subordinated the woman. Yet I would argue that to write against the Law of the Father, which is exemplified in the mainstream literary tradition, is to claim a voice and therefore some power through the literary text.

Of course, others who write from an oppressed position, whether their difference is perceived or unconscious, will produce texts that show similarities with women's writing. I am not claiming that the characteristics of Stead's writing are exclusive to a woman writer. Certainly, male writers outside the dominant tradition (those of the avant-garde or the working class) might also write in the forms endemic to women's writing. In "Women and Fiction" Virginia Woolf regards certain traits as exclusive to women's writing but locates them also in the writing of "a working-man, a negro, or one who for some other reason is conscious of his disability" (80). Julia Kristeva similarly equates women with the oppressed classes of society in "La femme" (24), quoted in Toril Moi (164).

Conversely, not all women writers inscribe their gender to

the same extent. Elizabeth Janeway in differentiating between "literary production by women" and "women's literature," maintains:

> It is quite possible for women to write successfully, by masculine standards, just because these standards are omnipresent in our society and so are part of the cultural background of women as well as men. (343)

Adrienne Munich in "Notorious Signs, Feminist Criticism and Literary Tradition" makes the same point: "Female-authored work cannot escape varieties of sexual malaise; identification with dominance has colonized most imaginations" (251).

Yet some women writers, specifically Christina Stead, write against the paternal essence of literary tradition. In Kristevan terms, the speaking subject has to be inserted into the symbolic, which she defines as "language as nomination, sign, and syntax" (Desire in Language, 136) and which she associates with the "paternal function." This process is brought about by repressing "instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother" (136). Both genders undergo this separation, but women, and others similarly marginalized, do experience their insertion into the symbolic as more problematic. In "Women's Time" Kristeva recognizes that when the subject becomes separated from a "presumed state of nature" (23) and inserted into language then "the analytic situation indeed shows that it is the penis which, becoming the major referent in this operation of separation, gives full meaning to the lack or to the desire which constitutes the subject" (23). For the woman thus experiencing (or experienced as) lack, Kristeva offers as a starting point her

"theoretical apparatus" so that:

> [W]omen . . . might try to understand their sexual and symbolic difference in the framework of social, cultural, and professional realization, in order to try, by seeing their position therein, either to fulfill their own experience to a maximum or--but always starting from this point--to go further and call into question the very apparatus itself. (23)

Stead, I would argue, calls this apparatus into question not only by her characterization of women, when she represents their oppressed status within an androcentric social formation, but by her formal undermining of certain givens of the predominant literary tradition, when she correlates narrative structure with the constraints a woman experiences within fictional norms or within the writing of fiction.

Gender is an acculturated and social phenomenon having little to do with biological differences. As Simone de Beauvoir maintains in The Second Sex "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295). Nancy Chodorow argues similarly in The Reproduction of Mothering, justifying her conclusions by citing the prolonged oedipal period for girls, which not only promotes lack of ego separateness and lack of differentiation in body-ego boundaries, but also "generates a psychology of male dominance as well as an ideology about women's capacities and nature" (208). Chodorow's analysis of gender has provided feminist theorists with a welcome reworking of Freud who seemed to regard cultural differences of gender as essential and biological.

Certainly, he noted sexual differences in writing. Freud, in the essay "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," hypothesized that "imaginative creation, like day-dreaming, is a

continuation of and substitute for the play of childhood" (182) and that in day-dreaming:

> The impelling wishes vary according to the sex, character and circumstances of the creator; they may be easily divided, however, into two principal groups. Either they are ambitious wishes, serving to exalt the person creating them, or they are erotic. In young women erotic wishes dominate the phantasies almost exclusively, for their ambition is generally comprised in their erotic longings; in young men egotistic and ambitious wishes assert themselves plainly enough alongside their erotic desires. (176-177)

Stead, ironically, seemed to fit right into such stereotypes of creativity when, in the interview noted above, she asserted that her ambition was "to love." Yet her equation of writing and love subverted her statement and she confided to Graeme Kinross-Smith "'When I've finished a story I feel loved that's what it is'" (75). Stead's narratives, far from being concerned only with "erotic longings," depict female characters who are egotistic and ambitious and who dramatize their rage in violence, (as Louisa Pollit does in drowning the neighbour's cat and preparing to poison her parents). In addition, Stead, by her acts of writing and publishing is contradicting women's silence and the Freudian passivity ascribed to women.

The language of Christina Stead and her narrative strategies are always forceful, so that her novels show none of the characteristics of women's novels noted by Virginia Woolf. In her essay "Women and Fiction", Woolf claimed these to be some "deference to authority" which introduces "distortion" and constitutes "weakness" (80). Woolf also discusses the "technical difficulty" of the form of the sentence which "does not fit" the

woman writer:

> It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use. Yet in a novel, which covers so wide a stretch of ground, an ordinary and usual type of sentence has to be found to carry the reader on easily and naturally from one end of the book to the other. And this a woman must make for herself, altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it. (81)

Critics have always found Stead's language difficult, but to regard her syntax as gendered is impossible to substantiate, nor did she, herself, ever attempt such an endeavour consciously, as Woolf did. More apposite to a study of Stead's writing is Annette Kuhn's observation in Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema:

> [F]eminine language . . . works against the very closure which, it is suggested, is a feature of dominant 'masculine' language, to the extent that such a language embodies a hierarchy of meanings and implies a subjection to, a completion and closure of, meaning. (17)

Stead's occasionally baroque prose could be regarded as a refusal to be subject to a completion and closure of meaning. Similarly, as I shall argue below, many characters in the novels are never brought to closure for that would imply a completion of meaning.

Method

My method in this dissertation will involve a close reading of Stead's texts in order to assess how she, as a woman writer, is inscribing her gender and, sometimes, that of the women

characters. Such a partisan approach means that I shall not be paying equal attention to each novel. House of All Nations and The Salzburg Tales barely feature in my discussion of language, power, and how the literary text reveals the desires of the woman writer.

Though this dissertation is informed by the belief that gender is acculturated, that a woman's psyche, her sense of her body, and the language she speaks, reads, and writes are all legislated by an androcentric social formation, I do not explore directly the position of Christina Stead within such a formation dominated by the white middle class male. My approach is not socio-historical, biographical, or psychoanalytic, but textual in its analysis of how Christina Stead's novels both mimetically, in terms of the characters represented, and poetically, in terms of the form, challenge the dominant literary tradition by revising or defamiliarizing the received literary practice. Much of this protest may be unconscious, displaced onto a subtext or dislocated onto a change of form or genre. Only by reading such repressed desires in Stead's narratives can one make sense of what most critics have found alternately, problematic, antagonistic, or destructive of the 'unity' or 'order' of the artwork.

My method, one that Elaine Showalter in "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" would label as the practice of "gynocritics" consists of a woman-centred mode of analysis with its foregrounding of women as writers in its interest in "the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of

the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition" (248). In my concentration on the more formal aspects of Christina Stead's writing I shall draw mainly from textual feminist practice, as well as from narrative theory, which is quite at ease within the dominant critical mode. Unlike Showalter, in the essay discussed above, I consider such eclecticism (assuming it keeps a sceptical distance) a strength. Isolation is merely an impossible and impractical ideal. Yet, because I do not consider the form of Stead's narratives as neutral constructs, I am questioning received narrative theory, by reading form ideologically.

In The Narrative Act, Susan Sniader Lanser's dissatisfaction with narrative theory divorced from any gender awareness, echoes my own:

> One effect of isolating the text from social realities is the complete disregard of gender in the formalist study of narrative voice. If any element is codable into a binary set, surely it is sex; yet nowhere in modern narrative theory is there mention of the author's or narrator's gender as a significant variable. . . . The use of the generic "he," which subsumes the female within the male, not only symbolizes a failure to recognize gender in the study of point of view but also perpetuates the idea that writers and narrators are properly male or that women writers and narrators speak and are heard as men. (46)

Narrative theory, by eradicating the gender issue, effectively silences the gender of women writers but not that of male writers. To obviate such normalization of masculine writing, a study of narrative forms should be contextualized and politicized and here Elaine Marks' proposals are pertinent. In her essay, "Feminisms Wake", she promotes what Nelly Furman calls "textual feminism." To Marks, textual feminism takes cognizance of

"authority and power as they are located in language" (108) and this is implicit and explicit, of course, in my discussing texts as marked by the gender of Christina Stead.

Language and power are the central issues in women's writing, as Stead's narratives attest, not the nebulous "women's experience" as Elizabeth Janeway maintains in her essay, "Women's Literature." To define women's fiction as that which "deal[s] with women's experience from within" (345), is to equate representation too easily with life and to embrace humanism by ascribing a unified universality to all "women's experience." Certainly, a critical method that takes women in language as its basic interest never celebrates the transcendental ego of classical bourgeois ideology. Humanism, with its patriarchal bias, has always been alienating for women as Judith Kegan Gardiner in "Mind Mother: Psychoanalysis and Feminism" recognizes. She maintains that women have never identified with the "old unified subject" of humanism (115), and Virginia Woolf, in her own way, substantiates this:

> [I]f one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical. (A Room of One's Own, 101)

As women of Woolf's ilk have always been at odds with a "civilization" that is gender and class bound, so the feminist critic is at odds with readings of women's writing that pretend impartiality. All critical activity is ideologically informed, and as Rosalind Coward in "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?"

suggests:

> As feminists we have to be constantly alerted to what reality is being constructed, and how representations are achieving this construction. In this respect, reading a novel can be a political activity, similar to activities which have always been important to feminist politics in general. This involves the contesting of natural attitudes, the challenging of agreed definitions--definitions which feminists have long recognized to be an integral part of oppression in this society. (227-28)

Even whether my reading of Christina Stead should be labelled as feminist when it is the masculist critics who should be marked I find questionable. Yet we have to keep to some labels for the time being, even though Christina Stead would not have approved.

I recognize that to have labelled my own ideology presupposes a measure of detachment from its all-pervasive nature and a consciousness of its implications in the critical act, which are unattainable ideals perhaps, especially given the endless perfidy of discourse. Yet an attempt must be made to declare one's critical allegiances (and transgressions) so that the reader can map out the fissures and crevasses of the textual terrain.

Toril Moi in Sexual/Textual Politics is sceptical of "the actual possibility of making one's own position clear" (44). She argues:

> Hermeneutical theory, for instance, has pointed out that we cannot fully grasp our own 'horizon of understanding': there will always be unstated blindspots, fundamental presuppositions and 'pre-understandings' of which we are unaware. Psychoanalysis furthermore informs us that the most powerful motivations of our psyche often turn out to be

> those we have most deeply repressed. It is therefore difficult to believe that we can ever fully be aware of our own perspective. The prejudices one is able to formulate consciously are precisely for that reason likely to be the least important ones. (44)

In chapter two I shall formulate a prejudice which has coloured my reading of Christina Stead's novels. Given the similar response of other feminist critics to Stead's narratives I claim that it is unlikely to be the least important one.

Chapter Two

Narrative Modes: The Feminist Reader and The Gendered Text.

As I have argued, the endeavour of both reader and writer is ideologically inscribed, but, too often, these inscriptions are ignored by critics. That neither the act of reading nor the act of writing can exist in a cultural vacuum, that art and language are socially received and produced have become commonplaces of feminist criticism. Analyses of narrative technique, however, are usually purely formalist and rarely link narrative strategies with the socio-political issue of gender. Even when Marxist critics like Pierre Macherey or Frederic Jameson consider textual ideology, or phenomenologist critics like Umberto Eco, Stanley Fish, or Wolgang Iser examine reader response, the topic of gender remains a silent issue. When such literary criticism pretends sexual neutrality, it only reveals a masculist approach.

Nelly Furman, in her comment on "The Study of Women and Language", describes another mode of criticism that takes cognizance of gender:

> Such investigations [on the communicative import of formal devices] emphasize that the power of words is not limited to the tactics of the speaker/writer or to the content of the spoken/written word, but that it resides as well in the interpretative process of the listener/reader. Cultural biases, uncovered in style and content, are similarly present in our learning or reading habits; interpreting language is no more sexually neutral than language use or the language system itself. (184)

Thus, the feminist reader interprets the language and form of Stead's texts with her own particular cultural bias, one that

has conditioned her to anticipate the development of a certain relationship between herself and the text. Judith Kegan Gardiner in "Mind Mother: Psychoanalysis and Feminism" suggests a maternal paradigm for reading because "all relationships, including literary ones between persons and texts, reverberate with the strong emotions engendered by and associated with one's childhood family ties" (114). Stead's narratives, as interrogative texts, lack a maternal, nurturing capacity, often depriving the reader reared on classic realism of a guidance to which she is accustomed. This analogy has its echoes in The Salzburg Tales:

> [The listeners] urged the Centenarist to speak again, and all the evening until very late they sat there and lapped up his tales which he squirted under pressure through natural juiciness, as a ripe pear liquor, a ripe breast milk, an over-saturated moss, water. (325)

Stead's narratives, unlike the Centenarist's tales, do not easily foster such bonds between the reader and the text. Stead never allows the reader to lose herself in an unquestioning immersion in the illusion of the story or in a unifying indentification with a character or characters. In this chapter I shall examine in detail why the feminist reader, encountering Stead's novels for the first time, finds them so difficult to read, and discuss the alienating strategies that Stead uses.

As the reading process is informed by the reader's ideology, which is partially constituted by gender, so the textual ideology is related to the gender of the writer. Thus, Stead, in her novels, undermines the traditions of the dominant masculine ideology subscribed to in classic realism, which Catherine Belsey, in Critical Practice, describes as "imparting 'knowledge'

to a reader whose position is thereby stabilized, through a privileged discourse which is to varying degrees invisible" (91). Stead's narratives resemble more closely what Belsey terms an interrogative text. These texts tend to "employ devices to undermine the illusion, to draw attention to [their] own textuality" (92); they "invite the reader to produce answers" to questions the text raises (91), and they undermine "the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject of the enunciation" (91).

To claim gender as the only factor behind this undermining of classic realism would, of course, be simplistic and to ignore the anarchic motivation behind any experimental fiction, yet gender, as I have argued, does motivate a woman's writing. Both reader and text are gendered, and the reader of Stead's narratives has her experience dislocated by these interrogative texts not only through the mimetic representation of character and events but also because of the diegetic or narrative methods employed.

Alienation of the reader from character

The actual reading process, as I analyse it, lies along a continuum of author-narrator-narratee-reader. In the narrative the author is "replaced" by a narrator (who may bear little relationship with the actual author) who tells the story to a narratee, sometimes dramatized (who may bear little relationship to the real reader). I shall also take cognizance of the ideology of the text itself, those norms which the text sets up,

either explicitly or implicitly. The implicit norms of Letty Fox: Her Luck, for example, are very different from those of the first person narrator. Similarly the norms of such texts as House of All Nations, A Little Tea, A Little Chat, and Cotters' England are not congruent with the modus vivendi of the central characters.

That Stead's narratives tend to preclude any response other than intellectual, because of both form and the distance set up between reader and character has been noted by the Stead critic, Dorothy Green. She maintains in her essay, "Chaos, or a Dancing Star? Christina Stead's Seven Poor Men of Sydney," that the novel "demands consecutive acts of attention, not a simultaneous set of responses" and quotes as relevant Nietzsche's comment "'I hate idling readers'" (161). Green's argument that Seven Poor Men of Sydney demands intellectual readers could be extended to other novels in Stead's canon, with the exceptions of For Love Alone and The Man Who Loved Children which incorporate Bildungsromanen of the female protagonists. Generally, however, Stead subverts identification with her characters' fates by various devices. I shall concentrate on a dislocation of the primacy effect, distantiating modes of depicting a character's consciousness, the unreliability of the narrator, and information gaps concerning the characters' sexuality.

In the primacy effect, certain themes or characters are foregrounded by being placed initially. According to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan "information and attitudes presented at an early stage of the text tend to encourage the reader to interpret

everything in their light" (Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics, 120). Of course, the reading process can be made more dynamic because subsequent information may call these items into question, yet Stead never has the reader reinterpret material in the light of the primacy effect. Rather, she disposes of themes and even characters who are presented initially. A Little Tea, A Little Chat begins with Peter Hoag, whom the narrator subsequently discards; Miss Herbert (The Suburban Wife) opens by foregrounding Dr Linda Mack, who all but disappears from the novel; Seven Poor Men of Sydney promises to be a Bildungsroman of Michael Baguenault, but, apart from a couple of later seminal scenes with Michael as focalizer no further inner view of him is presented; even For Love Alone opens with a father-daughter battle but fails to develop this theme specifically and by the second half of the novel Teresa's family has ceased to exist in the narrative.

The most dramatic example of a dislocated primacy effect is that of The Beauties and Furies, in which the apparent protagonist, Elvira Western, fades from the narrative. The narrator sets up reader expectation at the beginning of the novel. Elvira is the centre of consciousness and the focalizer through whose perspective events are presented: "Opposite her sat a man she judged to be Italian" (1, emphasis added). "Elvira once more caught the curious, friendly glance of the Italian. She looked indifferently along the car where the cloths were now being laid for lunch" (3, emphasis added).

Events are filtered through her consciousness and although the presence of the narrator is always felt in the inquit formulae

of "she thought," "she felt," "she wondered," the reader obtains an inside view of Elvira and anticipates a consistent development of Elvira throughout the novel in the same manner. Once Marpurgo and then Oliver appear on the scene, however, the narrator draws back from Elvira as focalizer and presents scenes in an almost cinematographic way. Occasionally, we have the quoted interior monologue of Oliver or perceive events through Marpurgo.

The reader then is "bounced," as E. M. Forster put it in Aspects of the Novel, from one point of view to the other. The narrator, subsequently, uses various focalizers. Yet the reader expects, as she did with Michael in Seven Poor Men of Sydney, a return to the initial focalizer, Elvira. This expectation is satisfied in the bath scene (69) which is an oneiric sequence when the "primacy effect" seems justified. But, later, although the action focuses on Elvira in the café and on her friendship with the prostitute, Blanche, the narrator moves away from her, concentrating more on the exotic Coromandel.

Stead distances the reader so much from Elvira that the reader is informed of her pregnancy in dialogue and is doubly distanced from the news of her abortion, which surfaces during the café chat of the demi-mondaines who discuss with Blanche Elvira's visit to the sage-femme. Perhaps the most glaring ellipsis is that her final decision to leave Oliver takes place off stage. Narratorial attention has switched from Elvira; the scenes have depicted Oliver and followed his history--his kidnapping, his desolation and destitution in Paris. Marpurgo, who had visited England brings him news of Elvira so that, like

Oliver, the reader hears of Elvira second-hand rather than directly. Elvira, the initial focalizer, fades from the narrative.

Gerald Prince, in Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative, labels such inconsistencies in point of view as "perturbations" where a text seems to require an answer but fails to provide it. Stead's narrative voice occasions just such a "perturbation" because the movement closer to Elvira and then a distancing from her appears cavalierly inconsistent.

A pattern does, however, emerge. Only when Elvira is alone do we gain inside information about her: only when she is lolling metaphorically in the "bath of her soul" does the narrator present her narrated monologue. In scenes with Oliver or in the cafés, Elvira is just part of the backdrop; events are not filtered through her consciousness, but she is viewed from the outside: she is described repeatedly as "mute"; she has a "buddhist expression," "unreadable eyes," or her eyes are a "universe of self-absorption." In her solipsism, her "navel-philosophy," she never really communicates with anyone, so that, to a certain extent, the reader is forced to witness, in a disjunctive succession of scenes, dialogue where Elvira is just another speaking voice rather than a focalizer of events. In being distanced from her, the reader, more able to recognize her faults and categorize her behaviour, conforms to the ideology of the text which not only discourages any identification with Elvira, but invites the reader to produce answers.

This external point of view and the dislocation of the primacy effect places the onus on the reader to interpret the

actions and the behaviour of the characters. At the same time, the unity of the reader is disrupted, because she cannot identify with any unified subject in the narrative, as she is accustomed to do in the more humanistic practice of reading. Stead's fiction does not generate such a relationship between reader and character (with the exceptions I noted above of Teresa Hawkins and Louisa Pollit), but forces the reader to be as distant as the narrative mode.

Another method Stead has of alienating the reader from character is through the ways of depicting a character's consciousness. The modernist, feminist reader expects fictional minds to be "transparent," to use Dorrit Cohn's term, but Stead withholds such accessibility so that the reader cannot enter into an intimate relationship with the character.

Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction is useful in explicating Stead's narrative strategies. Fictional consciousness, according to Cohn, may be presented through three modes: psycho-narration, which reaches deeply into a character's unconscious though the narrator's words are used, narrated monologue which may be a vehicle either for sympathy or irony as it merges a character's spoken or thought words with narratorial discourse, and quoted interior monologue, which quotes a character's thoughts directly. In the first two modes, either dissonance or consonance obtains depending on narrative judgement and each mode has a different psychological implication with psycho-narration reaching furthest into a character's unconscious, and quoted interior monologue the

least.

That the Stead narrator rarely uses psycho-narration, preferring the narrated monologue, is significant ideologically and in terms of what Stead wishes to convey in the characterization. That the reader is distanced from both Letty Fox and Eleanor Herbert through a dissonant use of this narrative mode suggests, therefore, that they do not conform to the implicit norms of the text. Because these norms appear to favour the progression and coming to adult consciousness of a Louisa Pollit or a Teresa Hawkins, Stead's portrayal of Letty and Eleanor proscribes any bond that the reader might form with fictional characters. That Stead prefaces Letty's story with a paragraph about her fictionality also distances the reader from the character:

> This is a work of fiction. The persons and events, other than political, are imaginary. The language and opinion are those of a type of middle-class New York office worker. (n.p.)

Letty Fox: Her Luck is narrated in the first person by Letty Fox herself, an unusual mode for Stead. The narrator herself is unreliable. A contemporary picaresque hero, who calls Moll Flanders to mind, Letty confesses all to the reader. She assumes her narrating self is more advanced than her experiencing self, not only in years, but also in experience and knowledge. Much of the irony at Letty's expense, however, stems from this very lack of disparity between these two selves and Letty's complete oblivion to the repeated patterns in her life. Thus to see any progression in Letty's life, as she herself does, is spurious.

The epigraph attests to this:

> L'expérience te manque, et malheureusement c'est une chose qui ne s'acquiert qu'à force de sottises et de bévues!" (frontispiece).

Dorrit Cohn defines dissonant self-narration as a "lucid narrator turning back on a past self, steeped in ignorance, confusion and delusion" (145), but because the present Letty Fox, herself, is replete with "ignorance, confusion and delusion" and cannot be considered a "lucid narrator," irony is the predominant mode of the narrative. Letty repeatedly sets herself up as wiser than her past self.

> At school I shifted from group to group--there seemed to be hundreds, and as many social strata as shelves of hell in the Inferno. I had no guide, but I was too young to want one. I don't know what the young want; I only know what I wanted. I wanted, in a way, to be truthful, to find the truth about myself. It's hard indeed for youth to be truthful; revelations never seem moral. Adults lie in order to be moral. (165)

Her final gnomic pronouncement, ironically, undercuts her ability to be truthful either as a youth or an adult.

Often when judgement is passed on the experiencing self, the narrating self is guilty of the same failing. Letty confesses how she "plated [her] sensitive soul in the rich, thick, wholesome folly of thoughtless, bodily living" (359) while she is, in the present, indulging in the same pursuits, and although she experiences some detachment from the younger Letty, the narrating self obviously enjoys reliving the roll call of her previous loves. When Letty does psychoanalyse her need for love as a quest for a man in her "image" (450) she ends not with a

resolution to change her pattern, which she sees, but, instead, immerses herself immediately into yet another love affair and, again, is "merely duped." Letty's philosophy is repeatedly undercut by the disparity between textual and narratorial ideology. Her feminism derives from being a "wide-awake" woman, buying her men "ready-made," and she considers "the ability to sell ourselves in any way we like [as] a step towards freedom" (5). Her radicalism merely involves a fashionable stance and her moments of high seriousness in confessional tones cannot be taken seriously, nor can her moments of realization.

When the younger, narrated Letty finally coalesces in time with the present narrating Letty she has learnt nothing. If she does articulate some self-knowledge, she ignores it, even submitting by her marriage to what she describes as a "mad urge to sink myself in the heaving sweaty mass of humanity and be one of the girls (or boys)" (453). Letty, the self-styled "sex-careerist," actually yearns for middle class respectability. Her "secret fear" is that she "might end up with the riffraff" (41) and her supreme idea was always to get married and join organized society. "I had always a shrinking for what was beyond the pale" (4). Ironically, by travelling "beyond the pale" she achieves her goal of embourgeoisement in marriage and motherhood.

Finally, the narrating self remains ignorant and deluded, as the ultimate paragraphs of the narrative in the present tense illustrate in their self-conscious romanticism and unwitting bathos. Letty ends "The principal thing is, I got a start in life; and it's from now on. I have a freight, I cast off, the journey has begun" (502). Yet the reader no longer believes her.

In the light of Letty's previous relationships with men, it is unlikely that she has now "got a start in life," because she is married. This marriage is her ending, the fate she has striven for, her luck. Even though, or perhaps in spite of the fact that she is pregnant, for Letty to envisage the beginning of a journey seems spurious when her life and career have shown no development, only repetition. Thus Letty has remained an unreliable narrator, untruthful, lacking in self-knowledge and political consciousness, and in spite of her sexual adventures, as middle-class as Eleanor Herbert.

This suburban wife appears to be the English version of the slick fast-talking New Yorker. She follows the same pre-marriage patterns as Letty and her marital disaster could very easily be emblematic of Letty now transformed into a "suburban housewife." Throughout most of the narrative Eleanor is the focalizer. The reader is absorbed into her outlook and prolific use of quoted interior monologue grants access to what she verablizes mentally, so that the reader's sympathy is initially elicited for her world view:

> "Where did I go wrong? Do you have to marry young to keep your faith in things? But I've got to have my share of living. Oh, the men, the men; why can't I keep a man? Other women get married; I just haven't got the knack." (38)

Although such insertions of quoted interior monologue into the narration bring the reader closer to Eleanor, a recurrence of narrated monologue also figures as an ironic way of presenting her speech patterns. Eleanor's use of cliché and euphemism is

consistently undermined in this dual voice of character and narrator. When the narrator reports, for example, that "Eleanor loved to hear the children's dainty chiming voices" (195) the sentimental adjectives are Eleanor's. The florid account of the evening with Cope Pigsney similarly uses Eleanor's vocabulary and speech patterns:

> What an evening! Eleanor had never had such proud pleasure. Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, and fifty others, all the successes, they just touched on in passing, swimming casually in this rich life, with a stroke here, a stroke there, wheeling and floating just as they pleased, but spending most of their time examining the serious affair of earning the guineas. Bronwyn interrupted once or twice, tried to draw them to shore, as it were. . . . (231)

The reader is schooled into realizing that Eleanor's catalogue of disasters cannot be blamed on external circumstances, but on her own naivety and conservative worldview, which a shift in focalizer highlights. One scene, when Eleanor applies for yet another editing job, will suffice to illustrate:

> The talk continued for some time in a more intimate tone. Eleanor always felt sure of her ground after saying something about aliens in the country, as if a fine silken bond had been tied and the differences of employer and employee were obliterated; and she said suddenly on a girlish impulse, "Oh, I like you very much, Mrs Jonovich. I feel we should get on."
>
> Mrs Jonovich raked her with a glance, spied on her silk-covered legs, noted her size in shoes and sat back in her chair with a hard, sour, bright look. "Very well," she said at last, smoothly, "I'll let you know in a few days. I don't know when Mrs Hersco will make her mind up that she must go. She has been very useful to me because she knows four languages."
>
> "Oh, yes, foreigners are so good at languages. I suppose we are inferior to them in that way," said Eleanor against her will--her tongue acted--she felt it a mistake. "One day," she added hastily, "I must take up my German which I haven't touched since I was in school. I was good at it then. Well"--she gathered

> her things and got up nimbly--"I think we have talked everything over thoroughly, haven't we? I'll be anxious to hear from you." And after a false exit (she went into a bare room), she went out. (269-70)

Stead uses Eleanor as focalizer, then, predominantly to foreground the discrepancy between the character's and narrator's perceptions of events. Eleanor's prejudice against "aliens," her assumption of camaraderie with her interviewer, even her ignoring of the foreignness of the name Jonovich does not constitute behaviour that is compatible with the perceptions of the narrator.

In presenting Mrs Jonovich briefly as focalizer, Stead has this character's reactions to Eleanor made explicit; her anger in the raking glance, and her competitive sizing up, quite literally, of her prospective employee do not attest to any sympathy on her part. Her reply to Eleanor appears, thus, as insincere, a mere phatic statement of closure to the interview. Eleanor, obviously, had been mistaken in feeling "sure of her ground." Her parting words implying some community with Mrs Jonovich are revealed to be as empty as the bare room she enters by mistake. Though one could analyse the socialization processes that made Eleanor who she is, repeatedly throughout the novel her behaviour is similarly undercut as her inner experience of events does not coalesce with those of other characters. The feminist reader's position, therefore, is not stabilized, because she is consistently alienated from the central character. The increasing split between character and narrator thus distances the reader from Eleanor.

She is also distanced from Nellie Cotter whose behaviour is

also not congruent with the ideology of the text, but in her case the alienation technique I shall focus on is that of information gaps about the character's sexuality. The depiction of Catherine Baguenault, similarly, has lacunae. The narrator's reticence or silence about certain characters' sexuality is not anomalous in Stead's canon because she usually treats a character's sexuality obliquely or in metaphor (as I shall discuss in more detail in chapter five). Teresa and Louisa are exceptions because they express their sexuality implicitly within their embedded artworks while Letty expresses hers explicitly in her narrative, but the depiction of Catherine Baguenault's and Nellie Cotter's sexuality derives from absence.

In Seven Poor Men of Sydney Catherine's sexuality is only hinted at and veiled in gesture that necessitates interpretation by the reader. When Catherine visits Baruch in his rooms she "began taking the pins out of her hair, and let it down. It was long and curling, and gave her a soft, bright, feminine look" (145). Their conversation continues until Catherine comes across the "Gloss--to Marion" and gesture again becomes the outward sign of her inner turmoil. Her hand trembles as she picks up a book at random.

> [S]he put down the book and went and sat down quietly on a chair with her eyes gleaming, liquid, speaking a thousand times more than her mouth could have, and, lost in passion, began, without thought, to do up her hair again. Baruch, in misery, stared at her, his hands on his knees, his lower lip trembling with rejected consolations. (147)

Not only does the reader have to interpret gesture but the

narrator depicts the scene without directly presenting Catherine's consciousness, so that her inner reaction remains, largely, a mystery. Elsewhere, the narrator explicitly draws attention to an ellipsis in the portrayal of the character of Catherine:

> Lying on the bench, at rest, because with the lowest and the lost, with the degraded, unambitious and debauched, Catherine reviewed her life. But there is no need to go over all that with her. It had always been the same though the scenery had been different. (214, emphasis added)

Sexuality as an absence signifies a particular type of silence on the part of the narrator that cannot always be explained away as a deliberate gap. Ellen Moers notes, in Literary Women, (141-71), that similar silences exist in modern novels written by women, that societal prohibitions were too great for these writers to overcome. In Stead's case these taboos are pertinent only to some extent for Catherine. The theme of incestuous love between Michael and Catherine was a daring one then and now. Throughout the novel, Cotters' England, however, the reader is kept from explicit knowledge of Nellie's homosexuality. Margaret Walters' opinion, in an introduction to Cotters' England, that Stead is silenced by the issue of lesbianism is apposite:

> And the lesbian bacchanalia at Nellie's weekend party, which finally unhinges Caroline, works neither as realism nor as fantasy. Stead suddenly seems nervous of her material; the relationship between Nellie and her "Bohemian" friends is never explored and the episode disintegrates into brilliant but obscure fragments, into unsupported hints at unspeakable corruption. (n.p.)

Stead uses certain narrative strategies to undermine the reader's understanding of the true nature of Nellie's party. That Tom is chosen as focalizer signifies a distancing from events because the actions are filtered through his perceptions; his involvement is peripheral, even non-existent at times:

> The women sat round talking in the front room or helped themselves to things in the kitchen. They had all brought food and drink. Tom was not regretted, he saw, when he went out to the pub. . . . When he re-entered the house, the women all looked as if he had broken in on a board meeting.
>
> "Have a good time," he said as he passed on his way to the kitchen.
>
> They stared at him without appreciation. Even Nellie said nothing and stared. He felt like Uncle Simon. (277)

Even more glaring is the information gap between the two consecutive sentences: "He did not hear anything all night" and "In the morning, Nellie was exhausted but devilishly gay, as the mood sometimes took her, and kept teasing him about his sleeping: a little anxiously perhaps" (278). Gesture attempts to substitute for explicit facts:

> Tom got up to go out. He stepped through their crossed legs. They were drawn away from the table, close together. Their legs, the stool legs, the chair legs, the bottles and glasses formed a series of circles and the late sun coming through the back, spread its rays through them. He had to cross the empty space to get out. He stopped in the middle, looked round and taking the rose from his ear, threw it to Eliza. Nellie instantly threw her wineglass at his hand as if to stop him. She was half drunk: it was one of George's best wineglasses. A few drops of blood fell onto George's green carpet. He took his hand with the other hand and caressed it, held up the smear of blood (287).

Not only is Tom injured for crossing that enclosed female space,

but George, too, suffers by proxy as his best wineglass is destroyed and blood falls onto his carpet. The emblem of the female circle is as symbolic as any plate at Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party," but again, Stead uses metaphor as the mode for conveying sexuality. Repeatedly, Nellie's homosexuality is dealt with obliquely; even in her quoted interior monologue she fails to elucidate what George might "suspect" about her female friend, Johnny, and, in a conversation, Tom's questions and his use of the word "lesbian" send Nellie into a "flurry" of denial and obfuscation (144-45). That the narrator chooses to remain silent on the subject of lesbianism not only speaks of her own reticence, but also places a distance between the reader and her understanding of character, if an aspect as vital as sexuality remains inexplicit.

Alienation of the reader from the narrative product

Having been discouraged from any easy identification with the characters through the alienating strategies Stead uses, the feminist reader attains a position in the reading process that is intellectual rather than emotional, a position from which she can more easily produce answers to the questions that the text raises. Lacking such a stable, unified stance, she becomes aware of the novels not as completed narrative products, which have achieved some closure of meaning through a privileged discourse, but as processes that undermine this discourse. Analysed in terms of gender, Stead's interrogative texts can be regarded as questioning the tradition of classic realism, which, in its

privileging of dominant literary traditions, can be equated with an androcentric ideology.

Jane Gallop in Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction describes this endeavour in Lacanian terms:

> Infidelity then is a feminist practice of undermining the Name-of-the-Father. The unfaithful reading strays from the author, the authorized, produces that which does not hold as a reproduction, as a representation. Infidelity is not outside the system of marriage, the symbolic, patriarchy, but hollows it out, ruins it, from within. (48)

The nature of this protest against patriarchal discourse in women's writing as well as reading is neither monolithic within a work, nor a universal phenomenon, yet it recurs. As Nancy K. Miller in "Emphasis Added" maintains:

> [T]he maxims that pass for the truth of human experience, and the encoding of that experience in literature, are organizations, when they are not fantasies, of the dominant culture. To read women's literature is to see and hear repeatedly a chafing against the "unsatisfactory reality" contained in the maxim. (357)

Throughout this dissertation I shall develop the theme that Stead challenges the encoding of the truths of the dominant culture in her fictions. Here, I shall consider her challenge quite specifically. In calling attention through defamiliarization and parody to the actual traditional methods of diegesis or story-telling, Stead reveals her gender as a writer and foregrounds the gender politics of the characters within the narratives.

Defamiliarization, according to Linda Hutcheon in Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox, may be defined

as "the laying bare of literary devices" which brings "to the reader's attention those formal elements of which, through over-familiarization, he has become unaware" (24). Seven Poor Men of Sydney is the most striking example of defamiliarization within Stead's canon. The novel consists of separate texts (or discourses) that incorporate separate stories. Naturally, some overlap occurs, but broadly the two separate texts--the Bildungsroman of Michael (and of Catherine, to a lesser extent) and the critical realist text of Joseph and his co-workers at the printing press--function, respectively, in what David Lodge in The Modes of Modern Writing terms the metaphoric mode and the metonymic mode. Stead has Michael as the quintessential mythic hero. His psyche legislates his world which is timeless, unregulated by chronological, metrical time but ordered by his inner world, whereas Joseph is more of an everyman figure, the eminently respectable conformist worker whose life is structured by his poverty, his parents, and the inescapable clocks at the printing press. Catherine, the idealist and political activist, functions in both worlds.

The presence of the autocratic highly perceptible narrator does little to diminish the dislocated experience of reading this disjunctive text; defamiliarization occurs in the narrator's stance too. Chapter headings parody eighteenth century novelistic and narratorial convention (exemplified in Henry Fielding's Tom Jones). Chapter three is headed: "A hot morning in Fisherman's Bay. We find four of our heroes at work in a devil's kitchen where the word is made bread" (64). The mock-

heroic tone satirizes not only four of the seven poor men, but self-reflexively calls attention to the process of writing. Similarly, the opening description of Fisherman's Bay ends with the narratorial comment "There is no place in the estuary, though, so suited for an old tale as this fish-smelling bay. . . ." (2).

This narrator who exposes her devices calls into question the mythic treatment of Michael, which leads to problems of tone. The description of Michael's actual suicide, his return to nature in the cathartic act of throwing himself into the sea from the cliffs, aspires to tragedy, but the chapter heading that informs the reader that Michael "brings the chapter solemnly to an end" (125) satirizes and undermines the ritualistic presentation of his suicide. The self-reflexive narrator lacks consistency with the "norm" of the mythological hero that the text, or part of it, has set up. Nor does her stance cohere with the more naturalistic text that tells the story of Joseph and Baruch. In subverting both metaphoric and metonymic modes the female narrator places herself outside of these discourses and subverts the illusion of the narrative. She also questions the authority of the author and, finally, foregrounds Catherine whose legends, told in the metaphoric mode, challenge her male narratees and whose life, told in the metonymic mode, battles against class and gender exploitation. Thus the defamiliarization strategies serve to highlight Catherine's persona.

Stead also subverts illusionism in the short story "The Rightangled Creek," subtitled "A sort of ghost story." By refusing to locate it generically, and by exposing her devices

Stead foregrounds the domestic and psychological drama played out in the women characters. By leaving a permanent gap in the information that the reader is given, Stead chooses to have the story remain, ultimately, as a puzzle for the reader to decipher, thus drawing the reader into the process of narration. The narrator is covert, offering little opinion and fewer facts, so that this tale seems undecided about emulating either a Poe-esque tale or a Faulknerian narrative of the sinister fecundity of nature. "The Rightangled Creek" is both and neither. Mystery is both the subject and technique of this story: is this a supernatural tale of the evil influence of the demented "Poky" over her old home? Or are the characters highly superstitious, interpreting every mishap as evidence of an evil force? The narrator plays it both ways: the setting of the house on the rightangled creek is bucolic, the description factual, but the loose plank suggests the possibility of dis-ease when "it wakes from sleep"; the taxi-cab fails to disturb "two immense affable ravens in the first half dead, sky-scorching bough" (116) and the house has a hidden staircase.

The inclusion of such de rigueur paraphernalia both defamiliarizes and parodies ghost-story convention. Laban confesses that if he transcribed his dreams of "hallucinosis" then "they would rank with the stories of Poe," and, to his friend's distaste and apprehension, he relates his vision of his dead mother "standing in the doorway in grave wax, her grey and white hair around her woven into a coat and crying that I had killed her. That's hackneyed, isn't it?" (137). Ruth Davies is

preoccupied with the notion that a monstrous, hairy man lives in the attic, and fears the threatened horrors of the countryside. Clare Parsons is obsessed with the unavoidable presence of nature with its sinister fertility and "rioting insanity." Sam hates and is tormented by the sounds of the mourning dove and when he and Clare hear footfalls on the hidden stairs at night they try to convince themselves that the mice are responsible. Also, because they cannot identify the harsh twanging insect-like sound on the verandah they consider it only half-playfully as evidence of Pocahontas's ghost.

The women who inhabit the house are far more closely connected with the sinister, possibly supernatural, aura of the house and its environs. Clare discovers a proliferation of domestic knives as well as those hidden in the house and, on investigating Hilda Dilley's trunk, feels a presence trying to push her down the stairs. The mysterious phenomena all point to the absent inhabitant, Hilda Dilley, whose own domestic life had turned tragic. Marriage to a work-shy soldier, who soon abandoned her, had transformed her into Mrs Grace, and had left her with venereal disease, a dead baby and a fixation that she was Pocahontas, an American Indian woman who had negotiated between her tribe and the white settlers. Dressed as Pocahontas, Hilda Dilley had attacked her parents with knives and a tomahawk and was then tricked into going to a mental asylum nearby.

Her Gothic story of love, betrayal, and disease reverberates throughout the novella and functions as a possible fate for other women, who all have problematic relationships with their husbands. The women's stories interconnect at the rightangled

creek and the house. Clare emulates Hilda in walking naked through the plot. Ruth had feared the presence of a hairy man in the attic; Clare studies Bill Jermyn's body which is "blanketed in hair" and thinks of bats flying into hair while feeling "I don't get the thoughts back from hairy men" (172). Bill Jermyn up in a tree also appears like a raven. His wife, dissatisfied, believes that what she ought to be looking for is a wolf and next afternoon one appears, or so she believes, though the narrator reports it to be a dog.

These women's sexual fantasies seem to invest the landscape and the men with sinister powers, but nothing is clarified in the story. An atmosphere of tension fraught with possibilities is built up, but the narrative voice never makes gnomic pronouncements on the events. Rather, the happenings are filtered predominantly through the perceptions of Clare who evinces both unsuperstitious common sense and a mystic connection with nature (162). She, too, wavers about defining phenomena that could be interpreted either as signs of the supernatural or as ordinary everyday occurrences. At times the narrative voice fuses inextricably with Clare's narrated monologue, which adds to the reader's confusion:

> She heard Sam breathing faintly in sleep. The living sleeping night was all around, close, formless, rich and suffocating as a mother's breast. On the black breast of night she fell asleep, too. The footsteps passed her again; she did not hear them; the bridge gave warning; they slept. The faceless haunter of the stone house moved slightly through the open attic door and down the closed stairs; with the strength of water behind glass, without shape and ready to pour through, it mixed with the moonlight at the locked glass door,

> mixing as blood with water, smoking, turning. But there was peace in the bedroom. . . . (164)

Finally, ghost-story convention is reversed: the nearby pragmatic Thorntons who hope to buy the plot at the rightangled creek are tentative about the place and Mr Thornton says they won't touch it yet because "'that poor girl is still alive'" (180). Hilda Dilley, alias Pocahontas, can only "haunt" her old house while she is still alive--or so the Thorntons believe. The reader is left to decide; the narrator remains silent, detached, putting the onus on the reader to interpret the signs, and "The Rightangled Creek" remains a "sort of ghost story" playing with genre in a way that foregrounds the lives of the women.

Stead also uses parody to highlight the position of women in fiction. Parody, of course, subverts the authority of the diegetic product. Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody in Narcissistic Narrative as an "unmasking of the system or of the creative process whose function has given way to mechanical convention" (24) can be located in a feminist context. Often women writers may skew a literary convention that has become established as part of the dominant discourse, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar perceive parody as a wide-spread phenomenon in women's writing:

> Parody . . . is another one of the key strategies through which this female duplicity reveals itself. As we have noted, nineteenth-century women writers frequently both use and misuse (or subvert) a common male tradition or genre. Consequently, we shall see over and over again that a "complex vibration" occurs between stylized generic gestures and unexpected deviations from such obvious gestures, a vibration that undercuts and ridicules the genre being employed. Some of the best-known recent poetry by women openly uses

> such parody in the cause of feminism. (The Madwoman in the Attic, 80)

Parody recurs throughout Stead's narratives: The Salzburg Tales, itself, suggests a parody of The Canterbury Tales; The Beauties and Furies, also, parodies genre, subverting romantic narrative in its bathetic denouement, undercutting the locale of Paris as a city of lovers, and satirizing the moon as a tuxedoed character from the demi-monde. Both Letty Fox: Her Luck and For Love Alone parody the convention of the woman's Bildung though in very different ways; neither protagonist attains the conventional ending in love or marriage (as I shall discuss in chapter six).

Like many modernist writers, Stead parodies classical myth, but unlike Joyce, for example, Stead's refashioning of myth foregrounds women's position in the narrative. In The Beauties and Furies the Furies are represented by Elvira, Blanche and Coromandel. (Marpurgo actually refers to them as Alecto, Megaera and Tisiphone.) Significantly, in Aeschylus' trilogy, Oresteia, the Furies' loss of strength, when they become reduced to fertility symbols, signifies the end of a matrilineal system. They provide a fitting myth, then, for Stead's narrative because the women exist only as adjuncts to men. Coromandel, though talented herself as an artist, needs to emulate Marpurgo; Elvira needs a man to make her existence signify, and the prostitute Blanche requires men for her economic survival. To their men, they are sexual and fertility symbols, headless and armless like the hamadryad statue, any putative potency suppressed because of the economic system that makes women dependent on men. Rarely do

the women in the novel emulate the rage that the Furies felt before their underground retreat.

The story "The Dianas" obviously parodies the goddess Diana, hunter and patron of women and childbirth. Aunt Diana hates her sister for marrying the man she herself desired and now tries to sabotage the relationship between her sister and her sister's daughter, Lydia. Lydia, "flighty" and man-mad, never considers other women, and resembles her aunt in hunting men. After her marriage and at her husband's request she shuns her mother and any women friends, emulating her Aunt Diana rather than any mythical Diana.

Stead's parody of myths here is dual: not only are the myths themselves deflated by being used as metaphors for characters' situations, but any possibility of characters in a contemporary milieu reproducing the sublimity inherent in the myths is annulled.

Conclusion

Stead's use of parody and defamiliarization alienates the reader from the narrative product. Similarly, other narrative strategies of dislocating the primacy effect, distantiating the reader from the character's consciousness, the unreliable narrator, and the gaps about a character's sexuality alienate the reader from character. The formal devices in Stead's texts have significance for the feminist reader because not only do they call attention to the position of women in the narratives, but they also reveal the particular strategies of a woman writer

questioning the privileged discourse of the male literary tradition. Ironically, Stead's practice even undermines the feminist reading which derives from humanist literary practice and which anticipates a maternal bond between writer and reader. Thus, a new bond between reader and text has to be forged, one that does not emanate from the very traditions that reader and writer are desirous of questioning, but one that involves participation in the narrative process itself.

Chapter Three

Narrative as Desire: Embedded Artworks in Four Novels.

Christina Stead depicts a number of putative artists in her novels, Coromandel in The Beauties and Furies, the eponymous hero of Letty Fox: Her Luck, Robert Grant in A Little Tea, A Little Chat, and Nellie Cotter in Cotters' England to name a few. Yet none of them, apart from Coromandel, ever creates any literary or visual artwork. Even the poet, Adam Constant in House of All Nations, seems unproductive because the reader never has any direct experience of his poetry. Catherine Baguenault in Seven Poor Men of Sydney, Louisa Pollit in The Man Who Loved Children, Teresa Hawkins in For Love Alone, and Eleanor Herbert in Miss Herbert (The Suburban Wife) are distinctive because Stead has them tell tales, write plays or draft testaments directly in embedded artworks which give voice to their desires. These artworks are not isolated instances as the narratives in which they are inscribed consider the motivation behind their creativity and just what kind of consciousness generated each literary work. The novels, of course, also locate these women's artistic production within a specific social context.

What interests me in Stead's serial exploration of these women artists is to what extent she portrays them as antagonistic to androcentricism in general and to the dominant discourse in particular. They experience problematic interactions, sometimes of incestuous dimensions, with either a brother or a father. At the same time their creativity is linked to sexual desire, and is informed by an idea of the mother or some acknowledgement of

death, be it their own or the deathliness inherent in a discourse that does not allow for any expression of women's experience. That these artist figures manifest the characteristics of a woman writer unfaithful to the Law of the Father suggests not that Stead is consciously psychoanalytic in her characterization, but that in portraying their difficulties and desires she is unconsciously exploring the dynamics of her own creativity. Stead acknowledged repeatedly that Louisa Pollit and Teresa Hawkins were modelled on her own life. In an interview with Giula Giuffré she maintained that she had written her autobiography in these two figures, as well as in others (23). When Rodney Wetherell asked if she herself had figured in Teresa's "struggle" and specifically in her efforts to leave Australia she replied: "'Yes, yes, that's quite true. It is I, it's me'" (18). That she portrays Louisa and Teresa as artist figures attests to a self-conscious preoccupation with her own art. The other two women artists, Catherine and Eleanor, tend to function less autobiographically and more as undesirable possibilities for the woman artist struggling to write in an androcentric social formation. Eleanor's relationship with the language of her father is particularly seductive and complex.

Language, as many feminist theorists have noted, duplicates the power structures of androcentric society.[1] As women

[1] Robin Lakoff, Language and Woman's Place (New York: Harper and Row, 1975); Dale Spender, Man Made Language (1980; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman, eds. Women and Language in Literature and Society (New York: Praeger, 1980).

constitute what Dale Spender terms a "mute" rather than a "dominant" group (Man Made Language, 77), they lack rather than embody this power. By depicting in detail women rather than men narrating, Stead ascribes some power to women's abilities to speak and write. (Teresa's Testament is more meditative than narrative but it does tell of her own life.) Catherine, Louisa, Teresa and Eleanor are, however, all framed by a social formation which evinces little sympathy for their endeavours. Though they might attempt to deny the dominant discourse it cannot, of course, be dislocated; though they speak of their own lives they never, with the exception of Teresa, attempt to reach any female community; though their writing might suggest transcendence they are always returned pragmatically to the framework of a male audience. Significantly, Stead's concerns predate critical interest in women's insertion into language. Only recently have issues of women and creativity, language and power been debated at length and I will draw from these writings to further my discussion. Before turning to the embedded artworks themselves I would like to explicate "The Mirror" from The Salzburg Tales for it encapsulates the position of the woman artist in these four novels by Stead.

Because the tale is told about Giselda by her brother she is immediately distanced from the reader in an extradiegetic framing device that mirrors the diegetic frame provided by Metternich, who exists in the baroque scroll work surrounding the mirror Giselda sees herself in. Metternich, a malevolent father-figure, symbolizes the repressive forces that surround the woman. Hence Giselda is doubly framed by him: bound by his patriarchal

order and accused because she negates adolescent promises and withdraws her adult sexuality from him.

The tale tells of Giselda and her brother who, as children, are literally enclosed in their father's observatory. He thus dominates their world view, because the only link permitted with the outside world is his telescope. Giselda's immediate world is sterile and there are intimations of future violence as she sits in the "square hall" next to the "sword-shaped" window. Denied human contact, she turns to the mirror which becomes her world and her creation (but it is always presided over by Metternich who bends over the reflected world). In a naïve, pubescent rite she declares her engagement to this figure in the scroll. Later she becomes affianced to Jourdain/Jordan, (who could represent the river of life or her sexual development), but the story of her life which she so clearly sees in the mirror is always moulded by the shunned patriarch, Metternich.

Mirrors recur in the story. Not many other people can bear the intensity of looking into them to tell the stories of their lives. Only Giselda can look, for any length of time, into the reflection where she finds her life story, but, tragically, finally seeing herself kills her, because the mirror only tells the story of a wasted life, disastrous and psychologically sterile. Just before dying she smashes her hand mirror, dramatizing her rejection of this life in a deathly rite of passage. Earlier she had had a premonitory dream of death and a vision which foresaw her son's mysterious connection with the mirror.

In this tale, Giselda may have the potential to look into the mirror, to create from the story of her own life, but Metternich precludes artistic creation so completely that she can only pass on this knowledge to another, younger self who is male and of a subsequent generation. Any potential she has as an artist perishes. Stead has Giselda enclosed in a male framework which she has internalized and that is highly unsympathetic, even murderously destructive of her self-development. This Gothic tale provides a gloss on the position of woman as artist in Stead. Catherine, Teresa, Louisa, even Eleanor, all use their own experience, looking in the mirror for inspiration like Giselda. Their art is intensely personal, their creativity interconnected with their sexuality and their deaths, but always in the background there lurks a Metternich-type figure which signifies the imposition of androcentric norms which frame women's attempts at creativity. Louisa and Teresa also have strong bonds with their mothers who become almost muses, (absently) presiding over their daughters' artworks.

Antagonism to androcentricism and to the dominant discourse

O'Barr and Atkins documented in "'Women's Language' or 'Powerless Language'?" that although 'women's language' is not gender-specific, it does constitute, generally, a language of powerlessness which is illustrative of and reinforces women's social position. Thus, for a woman to write is an act of political significance because, in so doing, she is claiming a voice and demanding an audience who will take cognizance of her

art. In the introduction to The (M)other Tongue, the editors, Shirley Nelson Garner, Claire Kahane, and Madelon Sprengnether, discuss the widespread nature of this phenomenon:

> In Civilization and Its Discontents Freud reproduces the conventional association of women with nature, men with culture, attributing that division to woman's maternal instinct, which causes her to resist the demands of culture as a disruption of the family. When women claim authorship, they not only subvert this paradigm, in which women may be spoken of, spoken through, but may not bespeak themselves, they also raise questions about priority and the stories by which it is maintained and conferred. (24)

Jean Bethke Elshtain in "Feminist Discourse and Its Discontents: Language, Power, and Meaning" is adamant that women should move beyond the polarities of "discourse as domination, or discourse as unavoidably masked, and toward speech as part of an emancipatory effort, a movement toward social clarity and self-comprehension" (129). This is certainly a project to pursue in coming to some feminist consciousness, but Elshtain's manifesto does not cohere too well with narratives that depict women mimetically rather than inspirationally. The women artists in Stead's canon may claim some power in their speech and in their embedded artworks, yet their discourse cannot uniformly be equated with the emancipatory project proposed by Elshtain. Their writings do not constitute "rational speech" nor do they always recognize what Elshtain terms "the censors within" though they may be informed by an "eyes-open, truth-telling passion" against the dominant ideology (129). So much of what women write or speak, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar maintain in The Madwoman in the Attic tells the truth "slant"; consequently I

would argue, as does Barbara Bellow Watson in "On Power and the Literary Text," that:

> The meanings naïvely called 'hidden meanings,' those not asserted in declarative form, are where we must look in literature for a certain realism about women's experience of power. (403)

The embedded artworks in Stead's novels are where we must look for an encapsulation of these issues of power. I shall discuss later how Catherine, Teresa, Louisa, and Eleanor attempt an alternative to the dominant discourse but, initially, I would like to turn to their reactions to the dominant ideology, which informs, even sometimes motivates their writing. Louisa most directly writes against the father in her antagonism to Sam, but Teresa, too, evinces anger with her father. For Catherine, the actual partriarchal nature of the social formation is more relevant than the person of her father, whereas Eleanor, generally uncritical of the status quo, publishes a novel in collaboration with her father.

In considering the myth of Astyanax, Leo Bersani emphasizes the "patricidal project which may be implicit in desire" (A Future for Astyanax, 12) and suggests, if tentatively, that it is "the role of sublimation, conscience and character-formation to modify the potentially limitless aggressiveness of desire" (13). These observations are relevant for both Louisa and Teresa who retrieve their patricidal desires from sublimation by giving voice to them. Teresa challenges her taunting father "'You offend my honour! I would kill anyone who offends my honour'" (13), and derides him and her brothers (whom she also equates

with the patriarchal order): "'You kill us then you tell us we had a lovely youth. The whole thing is made up. I hate you all'" (288). Louisa takes her patricidal project to its literal extreme, actually planning to kill Sam (as well as Henny) by adding cyanide to the morning tea, but her nerve fails her at the last moment. Even so, her threats, as well as Teresa's, suggest radical literary acts, for their statements not only explicitly defy the father, but also implicitly contradict androcentric norms.

Teresa and Louisa are both preoccupied with combatting received notions of morality and language which are imposed upon them. Teresa is directly concerned with the custom that women marry early or else find themselves consigned to the "Great Unwanted." Not only does this humiliate women but it also denies any sexual openness or experimentation.

> "And it's more misery for the men who make the laws than for me who never made a law, for women are outside the law; they make nothing, they say yes or no, to some collection of whereases. Why do men make the laws, say, about marriage, decency and the like, to shackle themselves? It's all incomprehensible." (93)

Though she is sympathetic to socialism, any support of trade union action becomes "secondary to the need to leave the lonely state that galled and humiliated her as woman and freeman" (224) and she plans not only to escape from Australia to England, but also to fall in love.

Louisa's emphasis is different, for though she is pubescent she is not yet of marriageable age, and she battles with her father more directly and more protractedly than Teresa does,

warring against his discourse and his control.

Sam had taken it upon himself to supervise Louisa's education and as a "reward" her first spoken words were his name "'Tamma, Tamma!'" Yet Louisa, to Sam's fury and chagrin, does not continue naming her father in such an adulatory, childlike fashion; instead, she attempts to silence him. During one of his prolonged diatribes about himself, religion, and love, she writes "'Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, I can't stand your gassing, oh, what a windbag, what will shut you up, shut up, shut up'" (372). Her brother, Ernie, sees that Louisa is beginning to enter the adult world of power, and Stead has the battle between father and daughter played on an adult stage with Sam wanting control of Louisa's language, censoring her writing and her stories, mocking her learned quotations from Confucius and others. He aims to break "that miserable dogged spirit" (477) of hers, but Louisa fights with all the language skills she has learnt from the differing baroque discourses of Henny and Sam. She mocks

> "The desolator desolate,
> The tyrant overthrown;
> The arbiter of other's fate,
> A suppliant for his own!" (298)

Ultimately, Louisa never doubts her ability to counter Sam as patriarch, quoting her personal motto from Nietzsche to him "'Out of chaos ye shall give birth to a dancing star!'" (315).

Catherine, who also quotes Nietzsche in an attempt to direct Baruch's attention to their gender differences which make for mutual alienation, is located by Stead within a wider social

context than Louisa. Catherine's relationship with her father features little in the narrative, but it is significant that she leaves home early, preferring to struggle on her own rather than to be obliged to accept parental support. Instead, she battles against a hostile social formation in which 'woman' is synonomous with a term of abuse, and women are either caricatured or mythologized. Her own motives are never understood. Michael labels his sister "'a rebel, a gallant character'" (31) and even Withers considers that she is "'built for revolution'" (38) yet Catherine appears directionless "'a woman of revolution without a barricade, with something of the politician in her'" (144) to Baruch. Although she works towards dismantling a society that exploits people by class and gender, Catherine is never as active as Louisa in her antagonism to androcentric norms. Tragically, her behaviour serves only to endorse her victimization. Although an artist herself, she rarely paints. Instead, she becomes the subject of art, posing as a model and is depicted, emblematically, either as a worn, crazy, young gypsy or as a suicide by drowning in a city where suicides at the Gap may be differentiated according to gender--the women die because of unwanted pregnancies, the men because of economic troubles.

If Catherine does not act as forcefully as Louisa, she shows an awareness of and has made some analysis of her position as Other, as an object of male desire and fear. Eleanor's analysis of the social formation, however, never progresses beyond her irritation with the "so-called moral system" which she, like Teresa, judges to be imposed on women by men. In her sexual openness she believes she is "striking a blow for freedom" but

she still conceals her activities in euphemism, and, essentially, conforms to rather than questions the status quo. Even her desire to be a writer, secondary to her wish for marriage, a home, and children is self-conscious, but self-deluded. Dr Mack points out "'But those are not your projects. . . . Society gave them to you and you meekly accepted them'" (12). Ironically, Eleanor's revision of her father's novel is doubly reactionary. This act of writing suggests not only a dependence on patriarchal discourse but it also apes and betters its conservatism, because her father is more socially progressive than she is. His novel appears to be an attempt to reach her, if somewhat patronizingly. "The story was tender, forgiving, like a man writing about his daughter" (169). Significantly, the "loathsome" editor who always contradicts Eleanor is called Waterman, prefiguring Paul Waters with whom she falls in love. For Eleanor, relationships with men are informed by a blurring of love and war. Her revisions of her father's story attempt to change the "female psychology" as if she wishes to claim expertise in that province, but, finally, she conforms to his wishes and those of the editors. Thus, socially and linguistically, Eleanor reproduces rather than challenges the script she receives from her father.

An alternative to the dominant discourse

Catherine, Louisa, and Teresa differ from Eleanor in their more rigorous attempts to counter not only the rule of the father but also to construct a discourse that is not congruent with the dominant mode of mimeticism and realism. The possibility,

however, of actually developing an alternative women's language is problematic, for women can never truly operate outside the discourse that is dominant. Feminist theorists such as Helene Cixous and Mary Daly have attempted to write different languages for women.[2] Monique Wittig and Virginia Woolf have experimented with a syntax and style fitted to the particular needs of the woman writer.[3] Though Stead, herself, never directly voiced any desires for a woman's discourse, the embedded artworks do take cognizance of alternative modes. Catherine tells an obscure fairytale that only a madman comprehends, Louisa writes a play in her own devised language, and Teresa attempts to allay the sufferings of "chaste" women in lurid illustrations of myth or legend. Their writing all demands some decoding, and suggests the desire of the writer to connect with the idea of the mother. The artworks of Teresa and Louisa, most obviously, seem motivated to reach their deceased mothers and other women. This sets up a binary opposition of writing against the father and phallocentricism and towards the mother and an acknowledgement of other women.

Feminist psychoanalytic critics have recognized the central importance and recurrence of the maternal figure in women's

[2] To cite only one of each of their works: Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," New French Feminisms: An Anthology, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton: Harvester, 1981) 245-64; Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

[3] Monique Wittig, Les querilleres, trans. David Le Vay (New York: Viking, 1971); Virginia Woolf wrote experimentally in a number of her novels, most notably perhaps in The Waves (1931).

writing that questions androcentricism.[4] More broadly, Chodorow has considered at length the preoedipal bonds between mother and daughter, a link that resonates in women's fiction. In "The Gothic Mirror" Claire Kahane explores the problematic connections between daughter and mother in Gothic fiction. Yet this phenomenon, the "ongoing battle with a mirror image who is both self and other," (337) is extensive. Alice Jardine in "Pre-Texts for the Transatlantic Feminist" draws on Kristevan theory in her analysis of women's special relation to the semiotic, "the space of privileged contact with the mother's (female) body" (228). She maintains:

> Within the classical Oedipal structure which has dominated the West, the female child, nonetheless, has necessarily retained a special relationship to this semiotic space. The impossibility of ever completely establishing herself as Other than the mother--even if that is what patriarchal culture has told her she must do if she wants to write--has combined with that culture's constant denial of her ability to write through its designation of her, with her mother, as The Other. Doubly Other, then, the woman who writes translates this at least double message. She experiences a kind of double vision . . . a difficult and double practice. (229)

Jardine is concerned with how this mother-daughter bond permeates the language of women writers, a phenomenon I shall discuss in connection with the embedded artworks in Stead's novels.

More generally, however, feminist critics and women writers have foregrounded biographical rather than linguistic connections

[4] See, for example, the essays in Shirley Nelson Garner, Claire Kahane, and Madelon Sprengnether, eds. The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).

with the mother. Virginia Woolf proposed that "a woman writing thinks back through her mothers" (A Room of One's Own, 101) and Rachel Blau DuPlessis notes in Writing beyond the Ending:

> Judging from the evidence in Gilman, Phelps, Ward, Woolf, and Walker, there seems to be a specific biographical drama that has entered and shaped Kunstlerromane by women. Such a narrative is engaged with a maternal figure and, on a biographical level, is often compensatory for her losses (which may themselves be imaginatively heightened by being remembered by her child). The daughter becomes an artist to extend, reveal, and elaborate her mother's often thwarted talents. (93)

Although such motivation on the part of the artist, Louisa, is never made explicit, she does experience intimate connections with both her deceased natural mother and her stepmother, Henny, who commits suicide. Louisa always tends to side with Henny in the ongoing battles with Sam, in spite of her stepmother's verbal onslaughts. Even when Henny seems set on strangling her, Louisa does not attempt escape but looks up at Henny "questioning her silently, needing to understand, in an affinity of misfortune" (57). Together, Louisa and Henny form some community against the endless incursions of Sam into their privacy:

> Whenever [Louisa's] irritations got too deep, she mooched in to see her mother. Here, she had learned, without knowing she had learned it, was a brackish well of hate to drink from, and a great passion of gall which could run deep and still, or send up waterspouts, that could fret and boil, or seem silky as young afternoon, something that put iron in her soul and made her strong to resist the depraved healthiness and idle jollity of the Pollit clan.
>
> It was a strange affection. It could never express itself by embraces or kisses, nothing more than a rare, cool, dutiful kiss on the withering cheek of Henny. It came from their physical differences, because their paths could never meet, and from the natural outlawry of womankind. (275)

From this "natural outlawry" Louisa endeavours to write a different language, most obviously to keep her private writing from her father. Initially, her diary is written in a secret code that is indecipherable to Sam, but it soon degenerates into French that he is able to translate (and she succumbs by decoding the rest). The young maid at Henny's mother's home teaches Louisa bad French as if those who are subservient are inserted differently into language, but the most striking instance of Louisa constructing an alternative discourse is, of course, in her play, Tragos: Herpes Rom:

> When it was written (there were scarcely twenty lines in it), she turned it into a secret language that she began to make up there on the spot. This was a good idea, she thought: so that she could write what she wished, she would invent an extensive language to express every shade of her ideas. 'Everyone has a different sphere to express, and it goes without saying that language as it stands can never contain every private thought.' But she was only a weakling and a mental dwarf now as before, and the new vocabulary did not ever exceed a few hundred words nor was there ever more than one play written in it! (391)

When Sam questions "What the devil was the use of writing in Choctaw" Louisa counters "'Did Euripides write in English?'" (408).

The play depicts a young girl defiant against her father who ravished her "only joy," her "peace of mind" and ends with the father murdering the girl, who spurns his sexual advances:

> MEGARA: (I am) an innocent girl that you have too much plagued. As mother says, I am rotten: but with innocence. If to breathe the sunlight is a sin, what can I do? I see you are determined to steal my breath, my sun, my daylight. The stranger will kill you.

ANTEIOS: What stranger? Are you mad? Kiss me, my daughter.

MEGARA: (Choking) Not me! Help! The stranger strangles me. Thou snake!

ANTEIOS: What stranger? Are you mad? What are you doing? Embrace, kiss me. (Aside) The snake? (He tries to hiss to himself.)

MEGARA: (Shrieking) I am dying. You are the stranger. You are killing me. Murderer! Murderer! Mother!

ANTEIOS: I am only embracing you. My beloved daughter. (But he hisses.)

MEGARA: Mother, father is strangling me. Murderer! (She dies.) (408-09)

The play depicts Louisa's feelings about her father and her desire for the mother who acts as a figure of succour (though she is ultimately helpless), while it also suggests Louisa's feelings of fellow-suffering with a young girl in the district whose privacy and virginity were violated by her father. (Sam had been incensed that the father, unconvicted because of his daughter's "confused testimony," should have suffered so unjustly.)

Louisa's discourse is often motivated by desires to communicate with other women. The Aiden cycle of poems celebrates her schoolteacher and she writes endless letters to her friend, Clare. In her diary she documents the dream she had had (before she could talk) of a well in the garden and then her dismay that, in reality, it did not exist, symbolizing her grief at the loss of her natural mother at this age. Connections with her mother remain strong: Louisa's sojourns with her mother's family at Harpers Ferry are restorative and as she is about to

leave Spa House she attacks Sam:

> "What do you know about my mother? She was a woman. I found a letter from her in the old redwood box. Someone who died sent it back to her when they knew they were dying. It was just after you were married. She said, 'Samuel is a very young man. I am very sick or I would not be writing such foolish things, I am sure. But he does not understand women or children. He is such a good young man, he is too good to understand people at all.'" (520)

Even though Louisa taunts Sam "'I'm my own mother,'" (521) she has obviously felt deep connections with her deceased mother. She takes as her talisman for her journey "round the world" to Harpers Ferry her mother's raffia bag that the latter had embroidered with beads. The narrative suggests that Louisa's future development as a writer will emanate from the mother's place, that she will have to return to some degree to these preoedipal links. Though Henny's murder liberates her, the bonds with her natural mother also strengthen her for her future as a writer.[5]

Teresa is also without a mother and, like Louisa, she hopes to travel to a place called Harper's Ferry also associated with her mother, because she attempts to reach it from her mother's relatives' home at Narara.[6] As she walks in the sun, in a "delirium of fatigue," she recalls "phrases and ideas" from the

[5] Blau DuPlessis, 99, stresses the liberational aspects of Henny's death for Louisa while neglecting to mention her close bond with her long-deceased mother.

[6] I have kept to the spelling of the novels: Harper's Ferry in For Love Alone, Harpers Ferry in The Man Who Loved Children.

previous night, and someone saying that her "dead mother" had had "very serious qualities".

> Who could worry about the qualities of a dead woman? If, for example, she had known what her mother's qualities had been, and what she had wanted, and if she had succeeded in getting it, she might know something about how to proceed now. (163)

Teresa experiences her mother's absence as a tragic lacuna in her life. She lacks a mother who could act as a guide, and had woken from a nightmare calling to her mother for help. Teresa goes further than Louisa in these quasi-maternal bonds by connecting with other women through her consciousness of their oppressed status. She intends to write a book about Miss Haviland to tell "'What she might have been if she had had a chance!'" and to recount her "privations" as a sheep-shearer's daughter and her "force of character and application" (353). Because of this woman's story, Teresa also plans to write about "the sorrows of women" in a book entitled either The Testament of Women or The Seven Houses.

Teresa's "The Seven Houses of Love" also seems to constitute a reply to a lack in women's writing. As an adolescent she had felt that in literature, perversely, her inner world was recognized by men but not by women because women silenced their own feelings in their writings. Her Testament is also an appeal to and a communication with "abandoned, unloved women" (419), for whom Teresa regards herself as a spokesperson:

> "The Seven Houses" were not for Jonathan nor for anyone then living but when she was already in the nameless dust, blown about the streets, as such women are, since the beginning, this forgotten box and this black-masked

> testament would lie on the table in the cold room; and these pale leaves of poor sterile women, floated off the tree of flesh, would not have been without someone to carry their words, timid, disconnected, but full of agony as those choked out of people beaten to death, these despised and starved would, dead, and dying, and to come, have an advocate in the courts of the world. The tyranny of what is written, to rack and convert. (419-20)

Envisioning a community of women involves a subversion of patriarchal structures which always demand a recognition of male hegemony. Nina Auerbach in Communities of Women notes:

> As a recurrent literary image, a community of women is a rebuke to the conventional ideal of a solitary woman living for and through men, attaining citizenship in the community of adulthood through masculine approval alone. The communities of women which have haunted our literary imagination from the beginning are emblems of female self-sufficiency which create their own corporate reality, evoking both wishes and fears. (5)

Teresa never envisions female self-sufficiency or celibacy as an ideal, however; her "The Seven Houses of Love" seems a compensatory meditational system rather than a new practice "by which the Chaste can Know Love" (420). Ironically, her Testament may serve to mark the ending of her relationship with Crow, but it also marks the beginning of her 'marriage' to Quick, and her loss of chastity. If the Testament does envision "Heaven and Hell" as a relationship with a male lover, it reaches towards a new discourse, a paratactic phantasmagoria of images and symbols promoting some consummation of desire for the reader and writer. Thus she promotes some fusion of the woman reader and the woman writer--such as she, herself, had never experienced in all her reading--in a discourse which talks of and to women's experience.

Although Catherine's tale never extends towards other women as directly as Teresa's Testament, it similarly challenges the dominant discourse by telling her story "slant" in metaphor. The tale is, in fact, about language, about the inability of fortune-seeking travellers to translate five words "in an unearthly tongue" on an indestructible black stone (300). Those who fail to decipher the code die, their hearts pierced by a golden sword, but a young apprentice, who believes that he has the secret, cherishes visions of transforming the valley, where the stone lies, into a place of burgeoning nature. He has read the translation to the five words, really only a clue to a further mystery, in a magic mirror that he had found in a witch's cave. She is a significant figure at the heart of the story and suggests an emblem for Catherine who, in her determination not to conform to middle-class values, appeared, in her self-inflicted poverty, as a "witch" and a "beggar woman." The boy judges the mirror to be the second eye of the one-eyed witch which suggests another parallel as Catherine is repeatedly characterized by her "blazing eyes" which have "exceptional lucency" (273). The witch's cave, like Louisa's dream-well, suggests female space. Catherine's tale speaks of a woman's relationship to language. Condemned to alterity by a phallocentric world view, she may have a very close connection, both cerebral and physical, with language.

Conventional knowledge cannot be transformative--these words on the stone mean nothing to the questers, "however much they know of languages, witchcraft or archeology" (301), but,

tragically, women are kept, as the witch is in her cave, from direct access to words which have the potential for far-reaching destruction and transformation. Catherine, herself, never provides the solution to her mysterious tale and she is prevented from bringing closure to her story by Baruch who goes on "heedless" when she stops in her narrative. The madman then tells his turgid, phantasmagorical tale of darkness, disorder, and death. He tells of a nightmare, Boschean universe of dismembered corpses, and monsters revealed on the "hideous submarine floor" when the sea retreats. Catherine, now pale with "bright eyes" and weeping loudly, before lapsing again into silence says, "'That is my life; only a madman knows it'" (304). Disorder, madness and death have constituted her existence; and the tale told by the idiot has signified everything. Both are *isolatos* who speak metaphorically.

Embedded artworks and desire

Though Catherine is silenced by a male narratee she has, at least, spoken her desire as do the other women writers, except for Eleanor, in Stead's canon. Their writing and narrating is closely associated with their sexuality and though they might not "write the body" as in *écriture féminine*, foregrounding women's bodily functions, their embedded artworks are revolutionary. Breaking the silence surrounding women's desires constitutes an opposition to phallocentric culture which consigns women's sexuality to alterity. In these novels under discussion, Stead reveals either implicitly or explicitly that women's sexuality is

a culturally-based phenomenon, as Michel Foucault has documented extensively in The History of Sexuality. Incest, of course, is one of the most tabooed desires in Western culture; that Stead treats of it in a number of her novels signifies her questioning of patriarchal structures which proscribe not only the satisfaction of such desires but even their acknowledgement. Ethel Spector Person confirms, in her study of gender-ordered sexuality, that "arousal itself is prohibited in many circumstances, for example, if arousal is attached to an incestuous object" ("Sexuality as the Mainstay of Identity: Psychoanalytic Perspectives," 610). Stead has the lovers Oliver and Elvira (in The Beauties and Furies) and Ed and Lydia (in The People with the Dogs) look like twins or siblings though they are not related to each other. In Cotters' England, much of Nellie's life is motivated by her sexual jealousy and possessiveness of her brother, but incest is considered at greater length when Catherine speaks autonomously of her desires for her half-brother Michael, and Louisa writes reactively of the threat of her father's sexuality.

Only in Seven Poor Men of Sydney does a character use incestuous passion as the subject of and motivation for a personal, confessional narrative. Foucault points out that "psychoanalysis allowed individuals to express their incestuous desires as discourse" (129) and Catherine's narrative can be inscribed into this mode. She specifically tells Baruch about going into Forestville asylum the next day for "rest and psychoanalytic treatment" and that she wants to begin to "unburden" her "soul." Just as Catherine's sexuality is framed, however,

by the society she lives in, so, symbolically, Catherine's narrative is doubly framed by male perceptions (Baruch's and Michael's), recalling the structure of Giselda's story. The positive aspects of Catherine's expression of her desires are counteracted by the narrative form, which has Baruch as focalizer, and by Michael's attitude to her:

> Catherine was silent for a while. Her powerful tragic sense changed the small room, even in their eyes, to a theatre. Baruch remembered her scenes as if he had seen them stereoscopically. And this, hardly believing, he called Catherine's narrative. (264)

This narrative focuses on Michael and his incestuous desire for Catherine, because she relates her brother's monologue rather than her own to Baruch and Joseph. Catherine's narrative tells of Michael's three journeys. Though ostensibly into the country these are journeys to self-knowledge, to an understanding of the horror of the nothingness beyond death, to a realization that Eros is, for him, inextricably bound up with Thanatos because his love for Catherine is taboo in the eyes of society.

Metaphorically, Catherine sees herself as the moon and the fire, and Michael as dark and cold. This points proleptically to his confession to her that he lives in the dark, because of his unnatural desire for her:

> "So a candle is a lovely thing, so I am ravished when I look at the starry way, and limpid Jupiter in the early evening; and also your eyes, Catherine, in their exceptional lucency, and your form, which is all darkness and white, the eternal contrast and composition of the world." (273-74)

And he spells out his desire for her as a longing for an image of himself, "a hunger and lust for death at root" (274).

In relating Michael's confession, Catherine is obliquely confessing her own love. Like the Ancient Mariner condemned to repeat his tale to an audience both frightened and not wholly receptive, Catherine has felt the need to unburden her soul to Baruch and Joseph who misunderstand her. Yet Catherine finally confesses her plans to live in another country with Michael but admits that they had remained mere fantasies, merely because Michael "only wanted to play with the idea" (275). As a rebel she was willing to challenge taboos, whereas Michael lacked the courage.

The patterns for Louisa are very different. Far from experiencing any desire for Sam, she feels only the threat of a paternal power which threatens incestuous intrusions. Here, fear and desire remain discrete: Louisa's only desire pertains to the power she can wrest from her father, but his behaviour is sexually provocative. On one occasion he tries to force a banana into her mouth and as part of her education he gives her Shelley's Poems, Frazer's Golden Bough, and James Bryce's book on the atrocities in Belgium. The two latter books disclose to her the "mysteries of men's violence" towards women:

> Sam had revealed to her in a few weeks, and without a word of his, the unspeakable madness of sensuality in past ages and concealed imaginations; nations had done this, armies, great names and glorious artists, and her father had told her to study the books carefully with the following strange words: 'It is the father who should be the key to the adult world, for his daughters, for boys can find it out for themselves.' (386)

In Louisa's vicarious initiation, sex signifies male domination and hatred of women, with women crucified or raped, but Sam believes that, as a father, he is acting as "the key to the adult world," using an image fitting in its phallic symbolism.

The battle between Sam and Louisa is drawn along language lines. He would come across Louisa reciting to her siblings in a "verdant theatre" in the orchard.

> On these occasions only did a kind of humility creep into him; and Louie, seeing it, would strike at him verbally, or flash a look which said, plainer than speaking, 'I am triumphant, I am king.' (351)

He denigrates her speech for being "too wild, too passionate, too suggestive" (340). In reply, Louisa's stories and dramas react against her tyrannical father and emanate from an undirected, unformulated sexual desire. One of Louisa's stories seems to celebrate her father as Sam-the-Bold, the intrepid traveller then in Malaya on a Smithsonian expedition, telling of how he devises means of combatting the evil of the Korinchi man or weretiger by very practical methods. Yet ultimately Sam's Western mind cannot deal with the evil which slips away into the jungle unharmed and Louisa undermines the exploits of a somewhat ambiguous hero-father, who cannot counteract primitive dark forces. Her strange little tale called "Hawkins, the North Wind," which she tells to her brothers and sisters, also denigrates her father: Ambrose, sitting on his bony horse, is duped by Peaslop and his wife, who cut up the horse piecemeal to stew, while Ambrose sits sleeping in its hipbone. When Ambrose tries to find his now non-existent horse, Peaslop, his wife, and their cottage disappear into the

darkness and a disembodied voice in the north wind calls out "Hawkins." Ambrose, with his Rosinante-like steed, suggests Sam in his self-conscious questing, his inability to discern evil and hence his potential to be duped. The black Peaslop and his wife emblematize Louisa's violence and power, and her desire to consume and destroy those naïve aspects of her father. The father-figure in Louie's narratives has changed from father as possible hero in the Malayan story, to father as villain in the play, and now to father as mere fool, countermanded always by a force which suggests Louisa's sexuality.

Teresa's imagination and her writing are motivated neither by incestuous desires nor by fears of incestuous encroachment; instead, she is inspired by "the countless flaming eyes of the flesh," by an undirected sexual longing. As a younger woman in Sydney, all her mental "private movies" fantasize a world beyond the sexual restrictions of the society she lives in--a "city state" where the clothes of both men and women reveal their physical beauty, and Gothic worlds of lust and cruelty. Her visions, which have a "mad fervour," serve to counteract her sense that she belongs "to the bloodless rout of women" (102). Questioned about her books, Louys's Aphrodite and Ovid's Art of Love, she observes that art has desire as its basis: "Everything in the world was produced by the act of love" (110). For her, great artists like "the obscene" because "that is real life" (185). Her Testament, "A System by which the Chaste can Know Love," speaks of desire, lust and violence satisfied vicariously in literature or myth, and the older more experienced Teresa has

two parallel desires, to complete her Testament and to "understand and love men."

Eleanor's art is merely an expression of decadence; her art incorporates no expressiveness of her true desires as it does for Catherine, Louisa and Teresa, but is merely a concealment and a perversion of them. Her sexual relationship with Quaideson enacts the brutal and sterile nature of her mode of writing. Quaideson collects instruments of torture, items that have stultified, ravaged, and crippled the human body, and he asks Eleanor genteelly, through surely with double entendre, whether she'll help him "to give life to old instruments" (287). But her sexuality remains impotent, unconsummated, static, consisting as it does of posing either nobly or perversely in "the quiet old rooms" over Quaideson's antique shop and enacting, to some minor extent, Quaideson's story of "the New Curiosity Shop" with its "lingering sensuality and sudden whiplashes of unseemly horror" (288).

Eleanor takes Quaideson's theory of art seriously. He considers: "'All writers look as if they had stepmothers. The artist always has an expression of unsatisfied desire'" (297). For him, fetishism is what expresses true sexuality, "the curiosa of this life, a territory which burns with the heath fires, the pure fire of original creation, sacred to Pan and Priapus" (295). And Eleanor's editing becomes a sort of fetishistic pursuit; she takes "an eager, almost lecherous" (35) interest in the next book. Her writing is too self-conscious, too money-motivated ever to speak of her desires; her narratives, like her life, speak only of repression and the deathliness of

stultification.

Narrative and death

Narrative, of course, is related to the postponement of death; prototypically, Scheherazade tells stories to ward off death and a writer may regard her work as guaranteeing some kind of immortality. Stead, herself, believed that she was about to die when she wrote her first novel and considered Seven Poor Men of Sydney as something to leave behind.[7] Similarly, these women writers in Stead's novels all speak of and are framed by death, though, tragically, their efforts to elude imminent death through their narratives, dramas, and tales seem doomed to failure. Those desires they have redeemed from repression by addressing them in their embedded artworks still remain unattainable and thus are untransformative and deathly. Leo Bersani points out that when desires are endlessly repressed a fantasy of death as the absolute pleasure results (6); Luce Irigaray questions in "This Sex Which Is Not One":

> Must the multiple nature of female desire and language be understood as the fragmentary, scattered remains of a raped or denied sexuality? This is not an easy question to answer. The rejection, the exclusion of a female imaginary undoubtedly places woman in a position where she can experience herself only fragmentarily as waste or as excess in the little structured margins of a dominant ideology, this mirror entrusted by the

[7] Stead wrote about Seven Poor Men of Sydney: "I am not just going to fade away, I am going to leave something." Quoted in Ron Geering, introduction, Seven Poor Men of Sydney, by Christina Stead (1965; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1978) xii.

> (masculine) "subject" with the task of reflecting and redoubling himself. The role of "femininity" is prescribed moreover by this masculine specula(riza)tion and corresponds only slightly to woman's desire, which is recuperated only secretly, in hiding, and in a disturbing and unpardonable manner. (104)

Female desire, then, is always censored by the dominant ideology which also censors and judges the women writers' narratives. When they tell their own stories, Stead's women artists remain thwarted in their desires for a sympathetic audience, just as in "The Mirror" Giselda never actually tells her own story, but is doubly framed by the male narrative. Thus the idea of death recurs in these women's experiences.

Catherine's relationship with death is associated very closely with the incestuous feelings between her and Michael. In Reading for the Plot, Peter Brooks points out:

> Throughout the Romantic tradition, it is perhaps most notably the image of incest (of the fraternal-sororal variety) that hovers as the sign of a passion interdicted because its fulfilment would be too perfect, a discharge indistinguishable from death, the very cessation of narrative movement. (109)

This image of incest functions similarly in Seven Poor Men of Sydney. Yet even without the fulfilment of his desire, Michael regards Catherine as representing death and Catherine, herself, longs for death: during a storm she cries "'Come sweet sea! . . . Come sweet death, I mean'" (136). Her tale and the madman's completion of it tell of death, just as her whole life is informed by deathliness. She describes her perception of Baruch's language:

> "Yes, while you spoke, I saw a door open in your speech, leaves drifted in and outside were barren leaves, and nothing but the white bones of death everywhere." (310)

Catherine dramatizes her wish for death by slashing her wrist in order to attempt to communicate with Baruch: "'I meant to show you the bone, but there is too much blood! I feel the skeleton under the flesh'" (311). Tragically, her final artwork is this sacrificial act, for communication seems impossible; that she places Baruch's letter to her in a "black lacquered box" symbolizes her despair.

Both her narrative and her tale have remained undeciphered by her listeners. After her narrative, Baruch asks if it was Marion, then, who had been the only woman who had anticipated that Michael was to commit suicide, and Joseph is silent. Catherine has to interpret her own narrative for her narratees. Baruch misunderstands, then trivializes her confession by acting playfully; Joseph leaves without offering any comment. The act of communication has been spurious because both listeners have misinterpreted the signs. For neither has the text signified its true meaning of a confession of incestuous passion. Baruch sees it merely as an artifact: "I can't get that tale out of my head" he tells its narrator (276), as though the "tale" has nothing to do with her, and when he parts from her he is mannered and bound by convention, giving a stiff European bow. Similarly, Catherine, like a modern Scheherazade, tells her tale in an attempt to stave off death in her desire to speak of it to her friends. Tragically, they are uncomprehending, and Kol's answer to Catherine's angst is to recite "in the tree-lined wilderness,"

his 'In Memoriam' for Michael, which tells, in self-consciously poetic verbiage, the story of the colonization of Australia, and self-reflexively foregrounds the "sad-eyed youth" (308). Deprived of a voice after her tale, Catherine acts on an elemental level; she cuts her wrist, enacting in microcosm what the madman had seen of the seas drawing back: "her flesh lay apart like the walls of the Red Sea divided" (311).

Louisa, like Catherine, also lacks an adult audience. Although her brothers and sisters are adulatory and appreciative, her creativity is, as I have discussed above, directed towards Sam who either never understands her attempt at communication or, alternatively, encroaches as an audience when she had desired some privacy for her writing. Even her narrative telling him the truth about her part in Henny's death he dismisses as an "incredible absurdity" maintaining that he cannot understand her. Sam, quintessentially pragmatic in literary matters, lacks the critical ability to interpret symbolically. Louisa tries to read the world to him through her artworks, but Sam fails to understand their import just as he denies Louisa's interpretation of Ernie's longing for a doll as a sign of death and potential suicide. He condemns her analysis as more evidence that "drama and poetry and nonsense" render her melodramatic, and threatens to censor her reading and her thoughts.

Louisa, in her life, is far more dramatically associated with death than Catherine, Teresa, or Eleanor. Her drowning of the neighbour's cat symbolizes her desire for power through death and prefigures her planned murder of both Henny and Sam. Furious and hurt at her father's mocking, she declares ambiguously,

"'What is fun to you is death to me'" (488); this "death" could be self-inflicted or revengefully murderous in intention. Louisa acts on her death-dealing fantasies rather than repressing them, whereas once Jonathan goes to England Teresa censors her own daydreams, an action which can be interpreted as deathly:

> She told herself that if she ever allowed one impure thought to creep into her mind now, she would never have Jonathan; it would be her punishment and a just one. "Love has nothing to do with that." Her former fancies fell away, withered, things hideous and unspeakable began to take their place, since the room could not be left empty, but Jonathan was far from all of it, a knight of poverty battling on a frozen island of the north. (248)

Years later, in England, when she discovers some of her unopened letters in Jonathan's trunk, she comes across a poem that speaks of death:

> What artisan this night,
> Blew in dark glass and fire
> To imitate that bright
> And sullen glance of thine?
> Along the foaming beach
> The tide pours dark as wine,
> Dead flesh, black blood, and each
> Is white and black of thine.
> In the fierce southern night
> The whirling meteors shine,
> Like eyes; I am blind to sight
> But what seems thee or thine. (325)

Teresa's questioning of her creative act has echoes of the Blakean experience of framing the tiger's "symmetry," but the addressee of the poem blinds her to any sight except of himself, thereby abrogating any hope of hers for an "immortal eye" through her creativity. Jonathan is deathly and Teresa's love for him deathly. The image of the tide suggests not only a sexual desire

informed by death, but a parody of the Mass in its pouring of "dead flesh" and "black blood." The poem stresses mortality not resurrection. This poem, without an audience like Louisa's and Catherine's narratives, had been consigned to an artistic death, like the panels Teresa had made for Jonathan and which he never appreciated. Subsequently, although Quick is a receptive audience for her Testament, she envisages this literary artifact as also being unread in her lifetime.

Thus Teresa battles with double censorship, perhaps most obviously with the censor without, whose disapproval or indifference reduces her artworks to premature deaths. As her own father seems fairly sympathetic, Eleanor's self-repression seems to manifest itself more as a censor within. Yet both forms of censorship attest to the rule of the father's negation of a woman's voice, whether it is an external phenomenon or internalized psychologically. Eleanor's art is always circumscribed or second-hand: when she takes a writing course she is bound to follow certain rules and any narrative or journalistic pieces she creates are merely revamped plots from magazine stories. Even her attempt to write an autobiographical sketch of leaving the family home is her fictionalizing of what occurred on the diegetic level, and the novel that she has published in collaboration with her father is little more than her editing of his work.

Her embedded autobiographical narrative attests to the deathliness of using cliché as an incantation against 'reality.' "Deb and Russ at Sunnytop Farm" is Eleanor's attempt to

fictionalize and hence control what actually happened. This counterpart of the actual departure is a denial of what actually occurred on the diegetic level, so much is it an attempt to prettify; the prose is cloyingly sentimental, part fairy tale, part child's storybook antiquated prose with its diminutives and terms of affection:

> Mummy looked at her wristwatch and gasped "Precious babies, the car will be here in an hour." But there was the dear old nursery to say good-bye to, and the kitten from next door and the wonderful old rowan tree with boughs like saddles upon which the children had many a time gone riding away to the land of enchantment, especially the old rowan tree. There was a tiny top leaf always glistening like a star, catching the sun until the first real star did appear. (138-39)

Soon afterwards she recalls her "actual" experience and cries "real tears," but later she cannot differentiate between the "true story" and the "sentimental version." Language, for her, involves a masking rather than any telling of the truth. Just as she fails to express her sexual desire throughout and after her relationship with her husband, so her writing negates herself and is confined to the deathliness of banal, magazine-type clichés. There is nothing organic about Eleanor's writing, the desire for which burns in her destructively "like an old wound" (98). Her craft of editing is compared to the chopping up of a body: she gives the "scarred and bandaged book" (280) she had been working on to Mr Ambrose saying "'I've left the blood and sinew in it, it's very meaty, and has a direct appeal to the senses'" (281). Yet her writing neither expresses or appeals to the senses, merely to a sterile convention.

Conclusion

Drawing together the apparently discrete instances of women narrating in their embedded artworks, suggests that they never constitute mere moments in the novels, but may be located within Stead's concerns for women in language. The artistic desires of Catherine, Louisa, Teresa, and Eleanor also reveal issues that are currently preoccupying feminist theorists and literary critics: the act of a woman writing may be an empowering one but is complicated by how this woman writer interacts with the male symbolic, whether she complies, like Eleanor, or attempts to combat it, like the others. The language of some of the artworks, their poetry and metaphor, as well as their legendary or mythical modes, testify to a closeness with the maternal semiotic, confirmed biographically by Louisa and Teresa's bonds with their natural mothers. All the narratives form brave statements of female desire that has been rescued from repression, but, because the social formation remains intact and hostile to these manifestations of desire, death figures in and around their narratives; the rule of the father remains dominant and censoring, as Stead illustrates throughout her canon. If these embedded artworks suggest more than moments, they do remain fairly isolated instances of women narrating within or against the dominant ideology. Stead depicts most other women characters as too cowed by or complicit with the male symbolic to be artists, putative or otherwise, and as fragmented into genderlects like the male characters.

Chapter Four

Discourse and Gender: Difference and Dominance.

Throughout her novels Stead repeatedly depicts oppression, whether it be of gender, class, or age. Only the gender struggles, however, are located within the language of her characters. Their discourses reveal either their dominance over others, usually a male characteristic, or their difference from that dominance, usually a female characteristic. That Stead depicts such battles by ascribing opposing genderlects to her characters foregrounds her belief in the essential power play inherent in all linguistic exchange. As I have shown, the embedded artworks of Catherine, Louisa, Teresa, and Eleanor speak their difference as they consciously, and unconsciously, attempt to combat paternal discourse, but not all characters encapsulate their ideological positions so neatly.

In this chapter I shall consider how Stead has other personae voice their ideologies in genderlects which expose their acculturation and socialization of gender. These genderlects, which may surface variously in dialogue or narrated monologue, reveal how the character is inserted within the power structures of the social formation. A direct correlation obtains between those who view women as inferior and those who speak in genderlects that reinforce oppressive patterns of domination.

Yet those who attempt power over others (Robert Grant in A Little Tea, A Little Chat, Annibale Marpurgo in The Beauties and Furies, Sam Pollit in The Man Who Loved Children, the financiers in House of All Nations) are also subjected themselves by rigidly

conforming to the identities they have been socialized into. They too, like those they have power over, experience immobilization within a prison-house of language. Michel Foucault is useful here in his discussion of the individual doubly turned into a subject in his essay "The Subject and Power":

> The form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the world "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (781)

Women are more likely to be doubly subjected than men are in a phallocentric social formation that endorses competition and domination over others. Historically, women have always been subject to patriarchal control and limited by their economic dependence on fathers or husbands as well as having their identities moulded by a conscience that would take its cues from learnt responses. As Simone de Beauvoir maintains of woman in The Second Sex: "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man, and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is The Absolute--she is the Other" (16). Stead's male characters may be entrapped by what Ibsen would term their "life-lies,"[1] but their sufferings are ameliorated by the

[1] Cited in Dorrit Cohn, Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 81.

congruency of the dominant ideology with their own. If Stead depicts their subjection, she also foregrounds their oppression of women, children, or their workers.

Generally, men fit more easily into the sociosymbolic contract as it is largely of their own making. As Cheris Kramarae in "Proprietors of Language" argues:

> By and large men have controlled the norms of use; and this control, in turn, has shaped the language system available for use by both sexes and has influenced the judgements made about the speech of women and men. Men have largely determined what is labeled, have defined the ordering and classifying system, and have in most instances created the words which are catalogued in our dictionaries and which are the medium of everyday speech. (58)

Nelly Furman, too, points out in her essay, "The Study of Women and Language", the predominant role that men have played in language:

> It is through the medium of language that we define and categorize areas and difference and similarity, which in turn allows us to comprehend the world around us. Male-centred categorizations predominate in American English and subtly shape our understanding and perception of reality; this is why attention is increasingly directed to the inherently oppressive aspects for women of a male-constructed language system. (182)

To equate all men with collusion in the socio-symbolic contract and all women with oppression by or antagonism towards it, is to oversimplify as Carol Gilligan does in her essay "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and of Morality." She concludes that women develop a different moral judgement which proceeds from "an initial concern with survival, to a focus on goodness, and finally to a principled understanding of

nonviolence as the most adequate guide to the just resolution of moral conflicts" (515). By grouping women thus, Gilligan ignores distinctions between women who might either be "male-identified" or "woman-identified." In "On Female Identity and Writing by Women," Judith Kegan Gardiner defines the former as those who accept their identity from what has been handed down to them by the Law of the Fathers and whose allegiances are to men, and the latter as those who question the patriarchal social contract, locating their loyalty with other women and a sense of themselves. The putative women artists, Catherine, Louisa, and Teresa embody the characteristics of the woman-identified woman, Eleanor those of the male-identified woman. Nellie Cotter in Cotters' England and Letty Fox in Letty Fox: Her Luck are also prototypes of the male-identified woman, never demonstrating any of the moral concerns and feelings of responsibilities Gilligan attributes to women. Nellie, especially, subscribes to gratuitous violence, and neither she nor Letty evinces any communal concern. Both place their own desires before those of others even if this involves destructiveness. Both aim to placate the phallocentric order, specifically in the person of Tom Cotter, Nellie's brother, or Solander Fox, Letty's father.

Women who are "woman-identified" would also insert themselves differently into language and certain female characters do subvert or challenge the masculine genderlect which I would define (according to criteria in Stead's narratives) as an idiolect which seeks to dominate, often in intellectual theorizing, which may be highly self-conscious or self-reflexive, and which is often entered into for its own sake, rather than for

any desire to communicate. This masculine genderlect is not congruent with Jürgen Habermas's concept of an "ideal speech situation." Thomas McCarthy explicates this on the basis of Habermas's work generally in the translator's introduction to Legitimation Crisis as one in which all participants have the opportunity, and are equally able, to enter into dialogue in an atmosphere in which no domination over others occurs. Only then is any consensus realisation of truth possible. Habermas, in his theory of communicative competence, stresses the importance of discourse in communicative interaction and considers how the implications of this ideal speech situation ramify into the participants' way of life, into their ideologies and neuroses.

His theory has relevance for reading Stead's novels. Rarely are any interactions free of an atmosphere of dominance so that "communicative interaction" is infrequent in her canon. In addition, a character's discourse becomes the measure of his or her humanity. Those who are linguistically self-reflexive remain trapped within patterns of language which never suggest any possibility of communication with others, or with themselves. These dominant genderlects oppress women, consigning them, always, to an inferior position from which they may attempt to combat this dominant ideology. Such male gendered discourse emanates from and talks of perverse forms of death, and narcissistically celebrates itself; dialogue proves to be an impossibility and cliché illustrates a linguistic lack of vitality that is indicative of the deadlock for both men and women. My analysis of the genderlects in Stead's novels will locate the characters within the socio-cultural systems they are

part of, but initially, I shall discuss the positive potential of narrative which obtains in The People with the Dogs.

Narrative and life

This novel is unique in Stead's canon for its optimistic vision of humanity: the Massine family is sprawling, loving, story-telling, joking, communal, ritualistic, obsessed with their dogs, and although they are essentially New Yorkers, they also comprise their own self-governing and self-sufficient state. Their ideology is socialist; their country home is founded on principles of communality and Oneida's name is that of a utopian community of the late nineteenth century.[2] Edward refers to the Massines as the "Republic of Arts and letters and Humane sloth" and if there is any aspect of their lives that can be criticized it is this lethargy, also referred to as their "creative sloth." Stead, however, foregrounds the creative side of the Massines which comes out in their story-telling and their jokes. Their stories are never self-referential, lying, power-seeking, or concerned with death, but speak of communal experience and a socialist way of life that embraces not only people but animals. The People with the Dogs deals with different forms of life--ecologic niches between humans and dogs, humans and plants. Even in New York nature is ineradicable, though the buds are "fat" or "greasy."

[2] Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds, Desire: The Politics of Sexuality (London: Virago, 1984) 7, refer to the Oneida community which, though not feminist in orientation, "did advance the thought and practice of sex radicalism."

All members of the Massine family tell stories, but Edward, especially, is a master story-teller. In his "search for ideas" he mocks the notion of the popular "cosmic mystery story," preferring the character sketch, and the stories he tells are about people. Even his memory of the war consists of his encounters with fellow Americans, of "people talking New York" (27). Stories become not only a metaphor for his way of life, but, in turn, they shape his perceptions of himself and others:

> Through the stories the American city view of life, its cool, salty, insolent, indecent, fanciful humor, crazy turns of phrase, its gruesome debonair, penetrated him, seemed to him to sum up exquisitely what he knew of life and people. He had never formulated a view of life or himself. It had all come out of these stories. (294)

Other characters tell stories too. Al, the chemist, is a raconteur; his story of how he got married comprises "an episodic account full of Rabelaisian and folk details" (337). However, the supreme example of a narrator who becomes totally immersed in her craft is the woman at the Turkish baths, one of a group telling "the most horribly indecent and ordurous tales that Edward had ever heard" (240).

The stories that the Massine sisters tell are a family ritual, a way of recalling their common pasts and communicating with each other, and suggest that an oral tradition has been inherited by the female side of the family. The sisters reminisce, chiefly, about their familiars and deceased familiars, the dogs. Neither the animals nor their female owners appear to suffer any oppression: the women in this milieu are powerful figures, artists like the concert pianist, Vera, or giants like

Oneida.

Stead's usual antagonistic dialectic between men and women does not obtain here. The men, apart from Edward, tend to be the women's understudies and secondary to the dogs, from Lou, with his funny, pointless talks, to Victor-Alexander, who speaks in duplicate, his speech patterns indicative of his repetitive, enclosed life. Yet the men do not suffer because the women appear more powerful. The language coheres with the humanity of this cast of characters; their stories on an hypodiegetic level resemble the extradiegetic narration itself, which is full of life and vivid colour. Their language never seeks to dominate but to communicate; the jokes they tell are innocuous and repetitive, their linguistic games are full of puns like "paw-sight" (for a dog's foresight), "more-on" (for a 'moron' who appropriates women's under-clothes), and the "what's noo" and "unlucky commentator" jokes are naïve and playfully innocent.

The People with the Dogs depicts a state between people in which power struggles do not play their usual part, and the stories and language used illustrate this. But utopias are never ideal, and this lack of struggle, ambition, or will makes the Massine milieu rather Beulah-like with its sloth and ennui. On the other hand, what is significant and different from, say, A Little Tea, A Little Chat is that Stead, in spite of some gentle satire, shows the best part of the Massines. The reader does not witness the repetition, for example, of many of the stories. Consequently, when Edward complains of ennui at the old "snapper end" stories or Oneida feels bored at her sisters' stories that

are forty or fifty years old, the reader cannot sympathize with either of them.

Discourse as death

In the embedded artworks of women writers, deathliness is indicative of censorship, or lack of understanding on the part of the male narratees. Discourse is also deathly when the speaker seeks not to communicate, as in Habermas's ideal speech situation, but to subjugate, thus perpetuating the dominant ideology. Nellie Cotter's language, both metaphorically and literally, is deathly. As a male-identified woman, Nellie takes on the characteristics of the masculine genderlect in her desire for power over others and actually talks Caroline to death. Like Eleanor, Nellie conforms to received notions of power stratifications related to gender, her unconscious legislated by paternal structures. She considers romance as the province of certain kinds of women, telling Caroline she is against any "milksop ideas of romance" which, to her, is "the way of the mothers, the grandmothers, the pathetic imprisoned Eves" (43). She aspires to be pragmatic and manly, affecting the masculine by dressing up in Tom's airman suit, symbolizing her wish for the male power exemplified in Tom. Similarly, in her relationship with her husband's ex-wife, Eliza, she takes over George's protective functions, caring for her, housing her, even drawing physical (though possibly not sexual) comfort from her. Metaphorically, she desires to enact male attributes as though her penisneid is not for the object itself but what it

represents.[3]

Nellie's relationship with Caroline foregrounds power, as Nellie aspires to impose her ideas of the dialectic between romance and reality. She talks Caroline to death, persuading her that only in death can she become an artist. Nellie's language and her talent for influence actively become tools for murder, just as surely as if she had used a knife to kill Caroline.

> "Your life is moving in cycles now to a certain end and you can't escape it; though you run howling and bawling through the universe that's closing in on you. No, it's a fateful thing you went to Roseland; it's a fateful thing you met me; it's fate you lost so many. For haven't you, pet? Haven't your friends dropped off from you; like him too, like Barry. It's your fate; and they're weak creatures; they feel your fate. They feel the death in you. Don't give up, Caroline. Know it; face it. It's been well said, if you don't confess, you must commit suicide and suicide itself is a confession; and not to commit suicide is a terrible confession. (52)

Nellie's reiterated plea is for Caroline to "introspect," to bare her soul to her in a confession, but Nellie uses language to her own purposes as Caroline realizes, subverting meaning to her own ends:

> Caroline had taken submission as a word that Nellie used for her own purposes as she used Introspection and Friendship. By introspection she meant a shameless curiosity and crafty use of her knowledge; by friendship what only a clique meant; and it was dishonest since she trapped people that way. But Nellie was ill, and by submission she might mean death, it might be a preconception of death which only the

[3] Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution (1970; New York: Bantam, 1979) 41 f. suggests that 'penis envy' can be seen metaphorically, arguing that women want the power males have, rather than the actual male genitalia.

> sick could have. And this chilling submission was what Caroline for the first time was feeling now. (294)

Ironically, Nellie had trumpeted that her "great truth is freedom from illusion" and she speaks against "romantic illusion or disillusion," advocating "stark staring reality," yet Caroline learns, to her cost, that, for Nellie, what she calls "reality" or freedom from illusion, involves "hate or jealousy or envy." Nellie only talks about being artistically creative, saying she wants to "make a beautiful drama" of her grandmother's life. That she desires to transmute life into art to make it worthwhile is perversely obvious in the way she forces Caroline into the position of an artist who has to face and combat death.

If Nellie is a death-artist with the air of a ghoul or vampire sapping life from her victims, her brother's way is more subtle: instead of talking women to death, he tells self-absorbed narratives of death.[4] His "endless tales," "horrifying things," are part of his seduction routine, and Nellie resents them because she judges his "heartbreaking tales" as part of his being "a great hand with the women." All his tales are informed, generally, by death, sometimes specifically by the death of Marion; he confides to Camilla:

> "And when it was over, I felt the passion of a boy. I felt quite new as if I had never tasted life at all; it was all to come. I still feel it. It was her death

[4] Terry Sturm, "Christina Stead's New Realism: The Man Who Loved Children and Cotters' England," Cunning Exiles: Studies of Modern Prose Writers, ed. Don Anderson and Stephen Knight (London: Angus and Robertson, 1974) 33: "Tom's tale spinning 'defines' his character in a kind of counterpoint to Nellie's passionate personal speech."

> that waked me up to real passion. I burned for it. I'm living for it now." (146)

Tom writes the poetry of death (285), with Marion's death as the subject and with its stylized rhythms and rhyme imitating death. Significantly, his poem focuses on the speaker rather than on the act of communication or the narrative act itself. Like his flirting it is never really an attempt to reach his female audience; rather, his discourse signifies a turning in on himself and it is symbolic that before telling his tales to Camilla, he looks into the mirror at himself rather than at his listener. His female narratee is also his mirror. Relevant here is Luce Irigaray's description of woman as "this mirror entrusted by the (masculine) 'subject' with the task of reflecting and redoubling himself" (in "This Sex Which is Not One", 104). Thus Tom's act is death-dealing in its double cancellation of the woman's identity.

Discourse as narcissistic celebration

Discourse, as I discussed in the previous chapter generally speaks its desire for some object or person, yet, in the male genderlect, discourse is often an end in itself, a narcissistic narrative that is self-reflexive and self-preoccupied. Discourse may become a substitute for experience, as it does for Robert Grant; similarly, theorizing, instead of constituting a sharing of ideas, becomes merely a locus for ego battles as it does for intellectuals like Jonathan Crow or Annibale Marpurgo. (That scholasticism need not be so dead-ended is illustrated

through the character of Baruch Mendelssohn who, though a theoretician, has communist ideals that motivate him to make connections between theory and practice.)

In A Little Tea, A Little Chat Grant's discourse is foregrounded. Talk, for him, represents a substitute for living and his life is a lie, filtered through cliché and euphemism: when Edda says that the blondine is real, "her body, her hair is real" as opposed to the abstraction of money, Grant frowns, "embarrassed by the word body" (66). He terms his actions idiosyncratically and though he does admit that with woman he has a "forr-r-mula," he is largely unconscious of the items within it: "a little tea, a little chat" signifies seduction, the "honey," the sexual act; he reiterates to each woman his need for "an oasis in my desert, a rose on a blasted heath" and "a woman, a mother, a sister, a sweetheart, a friend," (23) objectifying women to fit his needs. That he is totally unaware of the nature and extent of his routine is exposed by Livy, even after she has warned that she will illustrate his lines (219-20).

His use of language is also politically significant: when he takes Miss Grimm to his hotel "both said they were leftist" (17); he pays "lip-service" to socialism as he decides this will help him make more money and that he will not have to pay for the sexual favours of radical-minded women. Life, for Grant, never seems as important as the narrative possibilities of certain actions and he lives by his stories. After Barbara Kent marries Churchill Downs the Third he comforts himself:

> He had a surge of energy. He had a true story to tell, something to live for. As he now passed his life in a

> wilderness of lies, he enjoyed having something authentic to tell and to weep over. (173-74)

What he seems to want is not love itself, but material to discuss: "The talk of love had become a daily hunger with him, he was starving, never satisfied" (195). He is obsessed with the idea that a novel entitled All I want is a woman should be written of his life and he wants to make the novel a story of "true romance, true love." In blurring the plot of this novel with his life, his literary pretensions are indicative of his desire to command and to have power in planning his own fate. One of his seduction lines to Barbara Kent Downs to cajole her into a relationship with him is "Must be a love story." In foregrounding the literary aspect of all he does, he transforms 'life' into an artifact, as Nellie Cotter did.

Grant's genderlect conforms to the dominant ideology that effaces those lacking in power. In this corrupt world, women are cattle to be felt all over and judged like beef on the hoof as Karolyi does. Grant sees women as merchandise: "most had been bargains and most had made delivery at once. He never paid in advance: 'I got no time for futures in women'" (56). If, in the dominant ideology, woman is to nature as man is to culture, Grant varies this. He compares Barbara Kent Downs to the commodities of grain and bread, and regards property as a woman to be exploited. Everything that is marketable he equates with the female, feminizing property in "She's there to be stolen" in his Polonius-like advice to his son, Gilbert.

Like Letty Fox, Grant lives by lies. Most of his women are duped by his mendacity, which has disastrous effects on their

lives: most dramatically, Mrs Coppelius throws herself from a seventh floor window. Grant, as if to exorcise this encounter with death, or Azrael, tells variations of the story, never quite admitting to the truth or his involvement. His re-telling of the tale is according to his formula "'we want to fix it up a bit, gay, lighthearted, no funeral urns, modern, no tears, no lilies. We extract the gloom and put in the honey'" (277). His narratives are also an attempt to alleviate his guilt and in an earlier version of the story he had symbolically tried to restore Mrs Coppelius to life. Here a woman, spurned by Grant, throws herself out of the window, but, having landed on the fire escape just below, returns. "[Grant] stopped and laughed. 'Imagine my astonishment! An apparition! Resurrected already'" (227).

Grant, like Sam Pollit, is linguistically self-reflexive, calling attention to the nature of his discourse per se, using language as an example of his intellect, to turn, in his egoistic obsession, the listener's attention to himself. His discourse never suggests any real attempt to communicate in the way that Louisa tried to tell her life to her father. For Grant, art is a self-conscious performance rather than expressive of a self beyond his life-lie. If money is an art to him, art only represents money and his attempts at art are never instrumental in bringing any sense of order into his world. Instead, they merely duplicate the chaos and repetitive nature of his milieu.

He is as exploitative in his flirtations with art as he is in all his other relationships. Unable to create his own artwork, he commissions Karolyi to write a play (which Grant then

claims as his own creation). Karolyi has a vision of the artist as one who "works in silence, his life passes in a small room, no one knows him. He is a prisoner. Who shut him up? Son genie" (231). That the playwright has this nightmare vision of isolation indicates the solitary position of the artist in this society. Only Edda Flack whose analysis is feminist and Marxist suggests any possibility of art as a means of communication: she draws a caricature of Grant which he keeps with him always and says she would write a book about him rather than a money-spinning play for him.

In For Love Alone, Jonathan Crow's relationship with language is, similarly, as exploitative as Grant's, but the former is more scholarly. In spite of his working class background, as a male and an intellectual Crow is inserted unproblematically into theoretical practice, which confirms and reinforces the dominant ideology. Both Sheila Rowbotham, in Woman's Consciousness, Man's World, and Dale Spender, in Man Made Language, note the extensiveness of social and linguistic theorizing that silences or marginalizes women by ignoring them. Jane Gallop in Feminism and Psychoanalysis speaks derogatorily about the "coherent and thus phallocentric representations of theory" (63).

Stead has Crow embody the phallocentric, self-conscious 'savant' who denigrates women by belittling or disregarding them and who styles discourse as metalanguage. He never goes beyond his initial relationship with language which is sexually acquisitive and self-concerned. He confesses to Teresa "'What dirty words meant to us as children! It wasn't mumbo-jumbo, it

was a new thrill per word'" (174). Now, as an adult, he collects bon mots and phrases in order to impress, academically. He congratulates himself: "'Sublimation is the secret spring of style! That's a bull's eye, I'll put that in my next lecture'" (201). His genderlect, like Sam Pollit's and Robert Grant's, is also a means of power over others but not in a familial or business milieu; Jonathan uses sophisticated language as a means of seduction and he sacrifices content to form in his letter to Teresa:

> So easily did he write now after all those essays and letters, in engaging, acceptable confidences, with a soft, modest indiscretion; it flowed like peaceful maundering, he scarcely knew what he had written. Yet afterwards, he could remember the phrases and chewed them over, smiling to himself. (200-01)

His idiolect is also reminiscent of Sam Pollit's in its racism, its male chauvinism, and its fascism with its emphasis on selected breeding (183). Like Sam, Jonathan categorizes women in his symbolic, telling Clara that "slavery is a kind of instinct with women" (176) and judging them either as Madonnas or as whores. James Quick comments astutely to Jonathan "'Why is it every careerist tries to turn his mother into a Madonna--to prove his intellect is a virgin birth, papa had nothing to do with it?'" (434); for Quick it is "the sign of the misogynist" and Jonathan illustrates this tendency often enough, especially when he forbids his mother to go to his brother's wedding by brutally removing her hat and unpinning her hair, thus parodying the seductiveness of a woman taking her hair down but ensuring that his mother does this exclusively for him. To set up a woman

as an idol, as Quick recognizes, is misogynist. Labelled according to phallocentric terms the woman is not regarded as possessing her own identity but as functioning as a stereotype defined by the male. One does not anticipate a human relationship with either a goddess or a whore.

Jonathan's Crow's interaction with the "maid" at the boarding house in London exemplifies his attitude to woman as whore. That he has a sexual relationship merely out of self-absorption "excited by his own misery" reveals Crow as a Lovelace/loveless type. He also takes vicarious pleasure in narrating to Teresa the story of a "servant" girl's rape:

> "The girl was crying downstairs and telling what was the matter, and Burton yelling upstairs. What a din! Some of the fellows were making a row too. Would you believe it? The landlady didn't believe the girl and sent her up, to satisfy him, and he raped her, and a couple of the other fellows did, but we just sat and grinned. What a scene!" he finished reminiscently, but with a sidelong glance at her. Seeing she took it ill, Jonathan swung away to the window with a bitter contemptuous look and looked out. (339)

To Jonathan, the girl had deserved this treatment for appearing as a sexual being. Earlier he had described how her legs were bare above the knee and that she wore rolled cotton stockings. "He said these words in a lascivious voice, as if there was an erotic meaning in rolled stockings" (338). In his code, women, especially of the working classes, are to be oppressed; as the drunk in Sydney had called them "sewers", so to Jonathan they are "dustbins."

In imposing his ideas of women as filth onto Teresa, he undermines her just as he silenced and erased the female listeners

to his lecture in Sydney, doubly excluding them from his dominant ideology by saying "'We, every man jack of us, prefer the beautiful woman to the drudge in books'" (183). His ideas illustrate the mistaken popular assumption referred to by Ethel Spector Person in "Sexuality as the Mainstay of Identity: Psychoanalytic Perspectives" that "female sexuality is inhibited (hyposexual), while male sexuality represents the norm" (605). His theory of the sexes as "Two races with different needs" locates the men imposing their needs onto women who "must be selected for motherhood and impregnated by the state" (183). James Quick is horrified by Crow's dissertation entitled "Meliorism, or the Best of Possible Worlds" and wonders how Teresa can be impressed by this "intellectual scarecrow." Quick, himself, however, is not immune to enjoying the discourse of male power play, of verbal sparring, and he is seduced, if temporarily, into an ego display of verbal pyrotechnics in which he feels "enlivened" by "the hurly-burly of 'bull sessions'" (432).

Throughout her canon Stead satirizes intellectuals who purport to be radical but show little concern for the working class they theorize about even though they themselves might originate from the working class. Alvin G. Gouldner in The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class considers:

> To participate in the culture of critical discourse . . . is to be emancipated at once from lowness in the conventional social hierarchy. To participate in the culture of critical discourse, then, is a political act. (59)

Stead portrays her intellectual characters as being very conscious of such a rise in social status. The insertions of Crow in For Love Alone, Fulke in Seven Poor Men of Sydney, Oliver or Marpurgo in The Beauties and Furies into this "culture of critical discourse" do not signify political acts in solidarity with the workers themselves, but acts of egotism. Crow, as I have discussed, is always depicted as self-concerned; Fulke's speech at The Workers' Education Association mystifies Joseph and the listening seamen, and Joseph had been unable to decipher the "learned dialect" spoken earlier; Oliver neglects to join a protest march because he has an essay to complete and Marpurgo sneers at him: "'After, when you are well-established, you will go foot-loose among the intellectuals, dazzling them and the masses but well removed by a pretty line of footlights'" (26). Marpurgo tells Coromandel that the "liberation of men is the death of the intellectual as such" (246), yet he himself babbles on in his "learned farrago" or proffers "the usual claptrap" about cabbalistic lore. Stead portrays implicitly the intellectual's alienation which is inherent in what Gouldner terms CCD (the culture of critical discourse). As Gouldner himself points out, though CCD may be radicalizing it also "treats the relationship between those who speak it, and others about whom they speak, as a relationship between judges and judged" (59).

Only in Baruch Mendelssohn in Seven Poor Men of Sydney does Stead represent an intellectual who uses his theory to analyse oppression in a manner that is liberatory for rather than imposing on the workers. He even subverts radical discourse, cautioning Joseph:

> "These glib, rhetorical speakers sometimes fire the men but more often betray them. Follow the interest of your class. Become your own tactician, your own Caesar. Don't be afraid to criticise the speaker. Don't become refined, Joseph, your clerical training was a bad start, you always incapacitated yourself by believing in refinement. You could be a fine antique that way, but the workers would stick you in a museum. You can't follow Fulke or me. You must think for yourself. For preference, listen to those of your class who speak simply, without the flowers of rhetoric, without jokes, without cleverness; none of these glancing, glintering, slithering fellers." (177-78)

Baruch considers all capitalist oppression analogous to sexual exploitation, describing the workers' relationship with their boss, Chamberlain:

> "But it isn't an economic relation at all, ours here, it's a connubial one. We're married to Chamberlain, or we're his concubines. He pets us, snarls, he sees to the general supplies and we get no pin-money at all. . . . But I object to living in a harem, first, for natural jealousy, second, because I carefully surveyed myself in the glass this morning and I can certify I'm not an odalisque." (90-91)

Yet, in maintaining the traditional Marxist views, Baruch never analyses articulately the position of women:

> "There are no women," interposed Baruch flatly. "There are only dependent and exploited classes,of which women make one. The peculiarities are imposed on them to keep them in order. They are told from the cradle to the grave, You are female and not altogether there, socially and politically: your brain is good but not too good, none of your race was ever a star, except in the theatre. And they believe it. We all believe these great social dogmas." (205)

This kind of commentary removes the necessity for Baruch of having to make a specific analysis of the relationship between women and exploited classes, and the tragedy of women in this social formation is that they <u>have</u> to believe these "social

dogmas" in order to survive economically. They have to become "odalisques" or else prostitutes in order to attract the men who are going to reward them with economic security.

On the other hand, Baruch shows an artistic appreciation of Catherine's position in his drawing which depicts her as:

> [A] naked woman with agonised contortion of body and face bursting through a thicket, tearing her thigh on a splintered tree, while a boa constrictor and a tropical vine loaded with large lilies hung before her and impeded her. (154-55)

He deciphers the drawing for Joseph, explaining that Catherine is the prototype for "'the middle-class woman trying to free herself, and still impeded by romantic notions and ferocious, because ambushed, sexuality'" (155).

In his criticism of the falsity of the culture of critical discourse Baruch, as an intellectual, is anomalous in Stead's canon. He is no Jonathan Crow or Sam Pollit who seeks to dominate through his discourse. His romantic ideas of Marion may be undercut (143), but on the whole, however, the narrator seems to endorse Catherine's praise of Baruch's "golden sanity," as she endorses James Quick as an intellectual, if not a theoretician.

Discourse as lacuna

Characters' discourse and dialogue most dramatically suggest an absence of communication in House of All Nations and The Little Hotel. Both illustrate specifically how a capitalist ideology informs the characters' discourse. The former novel, in particular, denies women an existence or a voice, and in neither

is an ideal speech situation a possibility.

In House of All Nations, Stead explores the world of the financiers, those "mythomaniacs" for whom the sociosymbolic contract is one of competition and materialism. In this antagonistic world, they streamline language to their capitalistic needs, dispensing with niceties of style as extraneous. Leon's frenetic paratactic conversation is an assault aurally and cognitively:

> "No disrespect to you, Marianne. That was before I met you. Since I met you, never! Never, I swear to you! You're a fine type of woman. I respect you. But I've got to say it: he never fell! He's faithful to you, Marianne, I've got to say that for him." He ended with a shade of regret. (5)

He talks in ellipses, omitting subordinate phrases or clauses as he omits humanitarian or socialist sentiments. In explaining the wheat scheme, his discourse is so esoteric that Alphendéry has to act as his interpreter:

> "Wait till I get through and Michel will tell you, he explains it, elliptic," said Léon, quite unaware of the extraordinary manner he had of talking, himself, and putting Jules's incomprehension down to the fact that he was a Gentile, or fantastic, or unsound, or some other frailty, but with infinite kindness and calm, trying hard to hold in his horses, and going on, "The only problem is to get the U.S.A. government to accept Russian bills in payment." (395)

Language as a means of communication breaks down completely when the narrator has to translate in footnotes Léon's discourse for the reader (417). The financiers talk in aphorisms as if the world is reduceable to a clever phrase, to that finality and with that limitation; even the conversation between Rosenkrantz and

Alphendéry is not an interchange, but an egotistic experience for Rosenkrantz:

> [He] looked in the mirror all the time he talked and this gave his conversation an added polish, a reflective elegance of mood which matched well his polished fingernails, eye-glasses, white collar, and smooth thin black hair. . . . The responses that Alphendéry made to him were only legatos in the sonata of his reflections: he heard what was said faintly as an echo and he bound these musical echoes into his theme. (164)

For the more basic Alphendéry, the conversation is something to be consumed; he "bit off a chunk of the conversation, like a hungry, healthy man who bolts, and whose digestion is nevertheless unimpaired" (166).

Not only are women totally excluded from this type of conversation, the male sociosymbolic contract cannot make sense of them. Even Jean Frère, the writer of the people, shows only brotherhood, never an awareness of women, and is reduced to silence in attempting to explain his wife:

> Jean murmured, "Judith is a good girl--yes, she has her faults, we all have our faults: I have mine, I know." He made an effort. "Judith has brains--too--doesn't always know how to--that is temperament I suppose. Genius--a word I never use. Judith--oh, well, she's my wife, what--" He stuck. This was the workers' writer, known for his simple direct language, his rousing analysis, his fearless swordplay, his splendid diction, one of the few new writers in the grand tradition. Alphendéry smiled to himself, thinking unconsciously of the supple, perpetual, illuminated eloquence which was his to command. (478-79)

Judith and Jean do share the belief that poetry is inspired by desire, by passion that is unfulfilled but they differ in that Judith (like Coromandel) dreams her poetry. Like the creators of

the embedded artworks, Judith and Coromandel are more at home with the world of dreams and a symbolic mode, as well as ameliorative in their behaviour, as though women do have a different sense of themselves and morality as Gilligan maintains. Stead, then, sets up artists and women with their discourse that differs from that of the financiers as some sort of ideal to counteract the excessively male, competitive, ruthless world of the bankers and financiers.

In The Little Hotel even such friendship and human connection are never quite achieved. Stead depicts various attempts at communication or dialogue, but Mrs Trollope explains sadly "'Here is silence'" whereas earlier in her life she "'never had to think of getting friends'" (104), and Mme Bonnard confesses "I was looking for a friend too. I am always looking for one" (7). The woman from Geneva who used to telephone her remains nameless, however, and ultimately, their friendship dwindles to a disembodied voice telling an incoherent story, possibly about murder, and to papers filed with the police. The mystery remains unsolved, the message elliptical. The mad mayor's acts of writing and attempted communication provide a fitting comment on the nature of interaction in the Hotel Swiss-Touring: he writes "documents" on hotel towels complaining there is no writing paper more suited to his purpose.

In The Little Hotel Stead does not foreground male-female politics but thematizes, instead, relationships between different classes, the old order (the guests) and the new (the staff) with Mme Bonnard as a benevolent dictator. The hotel houses a collection of people washed up from the war, a variety of

nationalities who speak different languages and nurse psychosomatic illnesses and prejudices. That the guests go to a play called "The Dark Spot" in a dialect few understand is significant. The hotel suggests a microcosm of Europe in a state of flux and a metaphor for existential dis-ease.

Combative genderlects

I have already discussed, in chapter two, how Louisa and Teresa react against paternal discourse. Here I shall consider the battles drawn on language lines between husband and wife in The Man Who Loved Children,[5] the preoccupation of women's discourse with the marriage stakes in For Love Alone, and the denigration or mythologizing of women in Seven Poor Men of Sydney. (If the genderlects in For Love Alone and Seven Poor Men of Sydney do not appear directly combative they do always take cognizance of the other part of the dialectic, whether specifically confronted or not.) In these genderlects women are always subjugated by the phallocentric power which defines them as Other, as subsidiary to the masculist norm, or as superior.

[5] Many critics of this novel have referred to or discussed the differing discourses: Susan Sheridan, "The Man Who Loved Children and the Patriarchal Family Drama" Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women Novels, ed. Carole Ferrier (St Lucia: Queensland, 1985) 139 observes that the readers witness a "battle of discourses in the novel." Terry Sturm considers that Sam has two personalities (his egotism and his idealism) which manifest themselves in two quite different languages (18), and that Henny, too, is "defined consistently throughout the novel by her speech" (19). Shirley Walker, "Language, Art and Ideas in The Man Who Loved Children," Meridian 2.1 (1983): 11-19 analyses the difference between the "idiom" of Henny, Sam, and Louisa.

As Sherry Ortner notes in "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" it is a universal phenomenon that "the psychic mode associated with women seems to stand at both the bottom and the top of the scale of human modes of relating" (504). Both associations involve, of course, a stereotyping of women.

Sam's idea of women is androcentric: to him, women are devils, Eve, or witches, unless they are young and beautiful or tabloid pin-ups, and he holds the dominant view of nature which, to him, is a goddess, or "was licking at his feet like a slave, like a woman, that he had read of somewhere, that washed the feet of the man she loved and dried them with her hair" (475). He dislikes and fears women; though seeming to criticize their social condition he actually blames them for being "slaves" who are taught to lie. Carole Ferrier in "The Death of the Family in Some Novels by Women of the Forties and Fifties" notes the recurring literary phenomenon of how "within the family women are repressed and controlled by fathers/husbands, especially in their sexuality" (57) and Sam who denies Louisa's pubescent sexuality is an example.

His essential role is that of a father, as long as the children are young, pre-pubescent, and easily cowed, but Louisa is neither and can beat him linguistically. When he boasts that his system might be called "Monoman" or "Manunity", Louisa counters "You mean Monomania" (85), instinctively and cleverly obliterating the male-nomenclature. Sam as totemic father embodies the Law for his family and is fascistic and patriarchal and, as Daphne Patai argues in "Beyond Defensiveness: Feminist

Research Strategies," fascism, which can be linked to androcentrism and anti-feminism, "is the ideology of hypertrophied masculinity" (161). He sees himself as a ruler of his children, a Gulliver in their Lilliput kingdom, or a second Christ, and he seeks to dominate them, moulding them to his ideas. When Bonnie criticizes him for distorting his children's minds with "fairy tales" and "absurdities," for not giving his children anything to believe in when they grow up, Sam replies that now they believe in him and maintains that he, rather than "school ma'ams," should be in charge of their education.

Michel Foucault considers, in "The Subject and Power", the nature of the modern state which he defines as "a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (783). Sam, like Uncle Sam, certainly takes on the power at the head of such a state, subjecting the individualities of his children and wife to his specific pattern, which he also dreams of universalizing. His schemes of paternity recall genetic engineering at its most sinister: he wants to produce "'mighty children, a tribe of giants'" and he tells Naden with admiration about "'schemes for fathering many children . . . for preserving man's seed in tubes and fertilizing selected mothers'" (238). That he regards his family as symbolic of "'mankind'" with the tacked on "'and the wiminfolks likewise'" is indicative of his wish for a more widespread dominion.

In the confrontation between the adult world and the child world, the adults always have the power but mistrust their

offspring and worry about "secret societies at school" and "dark schemes and evil thoughts" as though they anticipate subversion of their parental status. Henny, always quick to sense oppression, confides in Louisa that her sister, Hassie, is keeping her daughter a child by encouraging her delight in dolls. (Louisa's largeness is surely an attempt to assume adult proportions in a challenge to adult power.) Adults always patronize those younger than them. The Pollit children constitute the lowest orders in Sam's system and are conscious of their oppression. At Sam's welcome home party they muse on the differences in privilege:

> Before the children were only lemonade glasses, but before the adults were wineglasses. The children suspected that even on this occasion the sherbet of paradise was to be drunk under their dry lips by the loudmouthed, money-pocketed monsters who had them in thrall. Why didn't these giants ravish the table, send the food flying besides, gobble, guff, grab, and gourmandize? To be bestial giants with the power of sherbet and also to exhibit such mean-spirited stinginess towards their own appetites was a conundrum the children could never solve. Let them once be such giants, let them even have the privilege of Louie, and they would not leave a crumb on a plate nor a drop in a bottle. The children sighed internally and ate as hard as they could hoping by their hunger, to soften the miserliness of their elders. (279)

As men have always initiated terminology, so Sam, like the Judaeo-Christian Adam, takes on the God-given privilege of naming objects in his kingdom; the nomenclature reveals his desire for power: women are defined secondarily as "shemales," with male as

the norm;[6] he infantilizes eight year old Eve calling her "names of engaging little dusky birds or animals" (63) or his "Little-Womey" because her child sexuality is his to monopolize--speaking to her in a voice "fallen to the lowest seductive note of yearning." He renames his children: Louise is 'Looloo', 'Loogoobrous', or 'Loozy'; Ernie is 'Ernest-Paine-Pippy'; Saul is 'Sawsidge' or 'Sawbones,' Sam Junior an extension of himself in Little-Sam. He talks in Artemus Ward style abusing language and invents a language which the narrator decodes for the reader:

> "Bring up your tea, Looloo-girl: I'm sick, hot head, nedache [headache], dot pagans in my stumjack [got pains in my stomach]: want my little fambly around me this morning..." (67).

Men and women are inserted within different genderlects. Sam and Henny are unable to find a common tongue, for they come from different classes. Christine Delphy challenges the sociological premise that women share the same social class as their husbands, arguing in Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression that, because this relationship is based on the woman's dependence, husbands and wives constitute different "sex classes," that women "form part of another mode of production" (39) which is domestic. Stead portrays this difference. Sam because of his gender seems automatically now a member of the bourgeoisie, whereas Henny, the domestic worker,

[6] Nelly Furman, "Textual Feminism," Women and Language in Literature and Society, ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger, 1980) (47-48): "The signifieds of the words female and woman exclude the masculine. The signifiers, on the other hand, seem to include the masculine: 'fe-male' contains 'male,' and 'wo-man' includes 'man.'"

comes from the working class. In a sympathetic merging of narrative voice and Henny's narrated monologue "[Sam] thought she was a sort of ignorant servant, and so he paid her almost nothing" (166). Henny, then, in an effort to make herself understood to Sam, talks to him in what he labels as her "woman's hysterics"; they do not even share a common vocabulary: "He called a spade the predecessor of modern agriculture, she called it a muck dig: they had no words between them intelligible" (167). Sam talks in highflown pseudo-academese classifying the disembodied spade within a system of culture. For Henny, however, the spade exists in the everyday and is an implement to be utilized in unappealing labour.

The dialogue that follows illustrates their inability to communicate:

> "Oh, my God!" she cried, turning quickly with her hand on her chest; then furiously, "How you frightened me! Was that your idea? Why didn't you let me hear you coming instead of sneaking up on me, spying on me in the middle of the night? What do you want? Are you spying on me as usual?"
>
> "Pet, why the deuce do you do these fool things? Half the accidents are caused by fool women in homes doing stupid things."
>
> "If you think I care if I break my neck!" She laughed, all the deep smudges and lines in her face coming out. "A broken arm, and I'd have a holiday perhaps; a broken back, and I'd have a holiday forever."
>
> "Henny, drink your tea. I came to talk to you quietly while the others are in bed--about my trip!"
>
> "I should think so! But why at this unearthly hour? Are you afraid of their hearing what I have to say to you?"
>
> "Let's talk, Pet, while we have the chance. We are bringing up a family and we haven't exchanged words for years."
>
> "Whose fault is it, I'd like to know," she said tossing her head and her poor naked neck with its goose flesh. "Every word you say to me is an insult. I used to go out with you till you insulted me in public. I

> used to have friends here till you insulted them. I won't let my children hear their mother insulted. When they get sense what will they think of you treating their mother that way?"
>
> "I'm not going into the black past--"
>
> She interrupted him, turning her back, "If you have something to say, out with it and leave me alone." (167-68)

This is certainly not an "ideal speech situation" in which two speakers communicate from an equal base. Economically disempowered, Henny's only weapon against Sam is verbal as she tries to speak her fury and despair. Her initial question is met only with another rhetorical question insulting her and when she talks of a "holiday forever," which suggests death, he commands her to drink her tea, surely symbolic of his driving her to suicide, because, ultimately, she decides to drink the cup of tea prepared with cyanide by Louisa. Sam's conversation consists of commands and exhortations. Even when he appears conciliatory he denigrates Henny's experience of the relationship, accusing her of going back "into the black past" when she is trying to explain the present to him. He reduces her to silence just as he shouts later during this interchange "'Shut up. . . shut up or I'll shut you up'" (170) and then does so, quite literally, by slapping her across the mouth.

What Sam most objects to in Henny's speech are her oaths "I wish to God" or "that's the devil of it," yet his expletives are euphemistic, idiosyncratic "By Gee" or "By Jiminy"; "strange oaths" the narrator comments "since he could never swear foul ones" (55). Women, of course, should not swear. Not only is it unseemly but swearing is usually regarded as a masculine domain. Sam's veiled language is congruent with his life-lie, the smug

Puritan stance that conceals his rigid authoritarianism. At his welcome home party where he forbids the consumption of alcohol partly because it transforms "our ministering angel" to "a harridan and--worse!" he chastises Henny for serving it, and his speech exemplifies the language of paralysis:

> "All right boys and girls," said Sam, at which they all fell silent and sat down irregularly. Then he got up and told them how very, very glad he was to be home again, home again, jiggity-jig; gladder than they ever would know, although they might try to guess, knowing him and how much he loved them all and particularly how much he had always loved his native land and his splendid, flashing Washington, and his Tohoga House and his tribe, flesh of his flesh, most particularly; and the work nearest to his hand. (280)

In presenting the speech in Sam's narrated monologue the narrator, clearly, satirizes him, mocking his vocabulary, his rhetorical clichés derived from nursery rhymes and political campaigning. Subsequently, he considers himself "a student of men and manners," silencing women in the generic term "men"; he portrays Fate as some great mythical female figure and speaks of the Word with his hypocritical piety as "sacred." Sam's genderlect, then, very obviously denotes his self-held image of the Great White Father, never the benevolent parent. He is instrumental in setting up and endorsing the sociosymbolic contract that his artist-daughter, Louisa, and his domestic worker/wife, Henny, react so violently against, one with attempted murder and escape, the other with suicide.

In For Love Alone men move in an intellectual world of ideas and word play, which Teresa longs to join, but women in Teresa's adolesence in Sydney, have to discuss the getting of a man; thus

they need to plot strategies if they are to have any economic security. When Jonathan voices fears that women own men, she counters "'we have no other property.'" To Teresa, "'A woman is a hunter without a forest'" implying that the so-called "hunter" is exposed and vulnerable. Forced to hunt for a marriage partner from a position of powerlessness, a woman is both proprietor and property, both predator and prey. Once married she moves up the female hierarchy and is thus superior to "old maids," who, in their turn, are excluded from the women's discourse of sexuality and married life, as Teresa realized:

> She went on thinking about married women and old maids. Even the frowsiest, most ridiculous old maid on the boat, trying to shoulder her way into the inner circle of scandalmongers, getting in her drop of poison, just to show that she knew what was what, was yet more innocent looking than even a young married woman. They, of course, hushed their voices when such a person butted her way in. She might talk coarsely and laugh at smut but they saw to it that she missed the choicest things; and of course, when they talked about childbed and breastfeeding, she had to sit with downcast eyes, ashamed. As for the secret lore that they passed round, about their husbands, she could never know that. (16-17)

Prohibited from this specific married women's genderlect, the members of the "Great Unwanted" are silenced by their lack of desirability.

These unmarried women are judged, even by other women, according to what Luce Irigaray terms "use-value for man" in "This Sex Which Is Not One":

> Women are marked phallically by their fathers, husbands, procurers. This stamp(ing) determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything more than the scene of more or less rival exchange between

> two men, even when they are competing for the possession of mother-earth. (105)

In Seven Poor Men of Sydney Stead depicts how those inserted in the dominant ideology "stamp" the women. In the prescriptive Sydney modus operandi, as I noted in chapter three, the latter are not considered wise enough to be granted control over their own lives and are thus deprived of existential choice: the young law student at Kol Blount's home believes that women in Australia should have "state fathers" as in Scandinavia, and Milt Dean cherishes an ideal of woman as "better half" and complement to her mate.

Dale Spender, in Man Made Language, discusses the "semantic derogation of women," (16-19) a phenomenon that Stead depicts here. Linguistically, women have become so reduced in "man-made language" that "woman" represents a term of abuse or derision. Baruch, more aware of the forms and effects of exploitation, understands that to be female is to be subordinate. He sees Withers as forced into an inferior position economically, "running around with that greenish look he gets often, like a girl at the wrong time of the month. A defeated woman he is in fact" (92).

Baruch's remark that women are "greenish" suggests a certain unnaturalness and evil: in the male symbolic women may promote fear which can be diffused either by ridiculing or mythologizing women. The quasi-obscene huge breasted, steatapygic advertisement images at the boot emporium exemplify the former. Kol Blount tends to mythologize women thus distancing them onto a historical plane: the women, Catherine and

Marion, in his clairvoyant dream about Michael's drowning, are lamenting like figures in a Greek chorus and his statue of Venus is black and headless, suggesting his fear of the female body cut off from its intellect, and female sexuality as redolent of dark forces. He berates the company of friends for resembling "a lot of slaves and pigs of Circe," viewing men as metamorphised into swine as a result of lust for the seductress Circe whom he blames, as bewitching whore, for the predicament of men. The dominant ideology is, quite literally, homo-sexual in its exclusion of women from the milieux of power and decision-making. To escape women, the men denigrate or even deny female existence and Michael tells his mother quite explicitly that rejection of women promotes male cohesivness. "'There's no God, and you know it yourself, but you must amuse yourself with fairy-tales, like all old women. What a breed! it's enough to make a man turn homosexual'" (31).

Dorothy Dinnerstein considers in The Mermaid and the Minotaur that fear of a mother's omnipotence in early life alienates men from women. Stead implies this in the relationship between Michael and his mother. He caustically belittles her, placing her in a female sphere that he considers completely separate from the male sphere of "movers and shakers." He demeans her for being "ignorant of the world":

> "All you know is, religion, home, fashion, some painted mechanical creatures that come all made into the world. The one bit of creation you can and must all do, does itself unconsciously." (31)

Michael, obviously, has limited sympathy for and understanding of

the position of women. He scoffs at his mother's life formula of "the family, a husband, religion" but he fails to analyse why "housewives" have this motto or to realize that it includes almost the only alternatives for working class women. His criticism only takes cognizance of their manifest behaviour, rather than analysing the reasons for it. The narrator, herself, never didactically points to these reasons either; her criticism of suburban values is a sub-text inherent in the actual behaviour and dialogue of the characters themselves. Only very occasionally does the narrator step from her withheld position to make a remark of great sympathy for the women in their alterity. She says of Joseph's mother: "Who can explain how superstition, proverbs, prejudices lay together, taking the place of sense in this simple old head?" (66).

Conclusion

Generally, Stead has women objectified in male genderlects to mirror their oppression in the social formation. They are idealized as goddesses or denigrated as whores, stereotyped in their relationships with men for whom they are always Other. Like Catherine they are driven mad; like the Sydney women they are forced to conform to man-made laws of marriage. Alternatively, they are silenced like the women in Jonathan Crow's audience or talked to death like Henny and Caroline. In Foucault's terms they are always "subject to someone else by control and dependence" (781).

Stead denotes that all linguistic interchanges are based on the power struggles of the androcentric social formation. Differences in genderlects can be attributed, as the narratives suggest by their contextualization, to gender socialization rather than to innate biological characteristics. She portrays both men and women as trapped within the prison-house of language, both doubly subjected by an external power that subjugates and an internalized censor within. Yet, I have argued, generally, that women are more likely to be doubly subjected because of the nature of the social formation that privileges the male and, particularly, that Stead illustrates this throughout her canon--with the exception of such male-identified women as Nellie Cotter.

The ideal can be located, in Stead's oeuvre, in the Massine family, notably Ed in The People with the Dogs, in Jean Frère in House of All Nations, and also in Baruch Mendelssohn in Seven Poor Men of Sydney. All these characters, both socially and linguistically, subvert the usual power structures of the androcentric, capitalist social formation. They do not claim domination over others, nor do they speak in genderlects that denigrate women. Their language is never narcissistic, informed by death, or paralysed by cliché. They are all artist figures; Ed tells stories of New York, Jean is the people's poet, and Baruch is the worker's theorist. They communalize their art and their desires.

The Massines and Jean Frère represent the life principle. The Massines are surrounded by burgeoning nature at their country home and Jean Frère's garden (his name, of course, is

significant) resembles a new Eden. Both places, Stead seems to suggest, are utopias, literally not-places, as though any alternative to the world of aggression inherent in genderlects is unattainable but desirable. Any discourse that subverts the tradition of alienation of the Other, solipsism, and competition may also suggest the desire for a utopia. Stead's use of metaphor may be placed within this context.

Chapter Five

Metaphor: The Desires of the Other

Generally, Stead commentators have emphasized the metaphorical intensity of her earlier texts, The Salzburg Tales, Seven Poor Men of Sydney, and The Beauties and Furies, at the expense of the later ones. Typically, Angela Carter, in the Introduction to The Puzzleheaded Girl, considers the early work of Stead to have "exult[ed] in language, in its capacity to enchant and seduce" while in the work of her maturity, according to Carter, she uses language as "a mere tool, and a tool she increasingly uses to hew her material more and more roughly" (xii). The later novels may be more realistic on a romantic-realistic continuum but they do proliferate with metaphoric or symbolic aspects that indicate that Stead is using metaphor as a narrative strategy in combat with the paternal metaphor.

David Lodge points out in The Modes of Modern Writing (109) how every text is metaphoric because it represents the non-fictional world, but these later novels of Stead go beyond such a definition in their mythic and metaphoric properties: the Hotel Swiss-Touring in The Little Hotel is a microcosm of a European country in a state of disorientation and fragmentation after World War II. In Miss Herbert (The Suburban Wife) texts become a metaphor for Eleanor's life; in the collection of short stories, entitled The Puzzleheaded Girl, the eponymous story tells of a numinous character representative of the "heart of woman" and the very title, "The Dianas", suggests a mythic reference. In both "The Rightangled Creek" and The People with the Dogs nature

accumulates metaphoric resonance and even in House of All Nations, that most metonymic of novels, Jean Frère's garden (imperfect though it might be) symbolizes Eden. In A Little Tea, A Little Chat Robert Grant is haunted by the fear of Azrael, the angel of death, and in Letty Fox: Her Luck, Letty's greatest lover, Luke Adams, is mythologized.

Metaphor is central not only to an understanding of Stead's texts on a deep level, but also to a placing of Stead, more broadly, within the paradigm of women's writing that I have set out. In her novels much that is usually silenced in women's narratives--sexuality, rage, a visionary desire for transcendence of the androcentric social formation--is displaced onto the metaphoric mode. Metaphor, of course, can be equated with the poetic as David Lodge notes:

> Prose, which is 'forwarded essentially by contiguity' tends toward the metonymic pole, while poetry, which in its metrical patterning and use of rhyme and other phonological devices emphasizes similarity, tends towards the metaphoric pole. Romantic and symbolist writing is metaphoric, and realist writing is metonymic. (80)

Lodge, after Roman Jakobson, correlates metaphor, which is paradigmatic, not only with poetry but with romantic and symbolist writing as well as surrealism (all modes in the narratives under discussion) and metonymy, which is syntagmatic, with prose, realistic writing, and cubism. Bev Roberts in "Notes on Women and Literature" differentiates between the public and private voice of the woman writer: the former is evident in "the social form of fiction," the latter in the "a-social form of the poem in which language is used in a more personal and self-

expressive way" (101). Stead's narrative fiction incorporates both voices--the public voice which is metonymic, realistic, and part of the surface structure, and the private voice which is metaphoric, romantic, and part of the deep structure.

In this chapter I shall examine the ideological significance of Stead's narrative form by concentrating on metaphor in order to understand just what she, as a woman writer, is concealing or revealing in the metaphoric mode. I shall consider how Stead uses metaphor in three different ways. She has the metaphoric mode, rather than the metonymic, convey the sexuality of her female characters and she interrogates the metaphor of the dominant tradition by subverting its commonplaces. While these metaphors tend to occur in the sphere of domesticity and nature, others, which are more metaphysical, suggest a desire for a realm of transcendence, a place elsewhere. Stead's displacement of certain aspects of a woman's character on to metaphor is complex. Though I discern a correlation in Stead's writing between women's creativity and the metaphorical mode, the narratives, generally, do not regard this positively. When a woman's expression of her sexuality becomes confined statically to metaphor, then she is unable to live on a metonymic level.

My approach to metaphor will not involve any detailed discussion of the intrinsic or semantic qualities of the metaphor. What preoccupies me are the metaphors' extrinsic concerns which are mimetic or referential, the reason for particular comparisons being used, and the possibility within certain metaphors of a transcendent dimension. I shall discuss to what extent Stead's use of metaphor suggests a particularly

feminine perception on the part of the narrator.

Certainly, women characters throughout Stead's canon are more connected to the metaphoric mode. Women's embedded narratives, notably those of Catherine, Teresa, and Louisa, only function if they are decoded metaphorically whereas male artists, besides the young Michael in Seven Poor Men of Sydney, show no such affinity for metaphorical expression. Metaphor thus constitutes a vehicle for feminine rather than masculine expression, as feminine sexuality and creativity are repeatedly suggested through metaphor in these stories or meditations. The implications of this connection between female characters and metaphor in Stead's narratives attests to a desire, usually negated, for a female space to transcend realist male discourse. Paul Ricoeur on the tradition of rhetoric in "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling" is worth subverting in this regard:

> The very expression "figure of speech" implies that in metaphor, as in the other tropes or turns, discourse assumes the nature of a body by displaying forms and traits which usually characterize the human face, man's "figure"; it is as though the tropes gave to discourse a quasi-bodily externalization. By providing a kind of figurability to the message, the tropes make discourse disappear. (142)

If metaphor "assumes the nature of a body" Ricoeur's attribution of the male gender is too hasty. In women's writing which interrogates the male symbolic such a "figurability" would be of a female rather than a male gender. The "discourse" itself would signify the dominant discourse of the male symbolic. Perhaps it is not too extreme to propose that the woman writer's desire may

be to make this "male" discourse disappear through the use of a "female" trope such as metaphor.

Sexuality in metaphor

Initially I would like to illustrate how Stead depicts a character's sexuality metaphorically through dreams and daydreams, or "madness." As Belsey points out:

> The classic realist text had not yet [at the time of Joyce and D. H. Lawrence] developed a way of signifying women's sexuality except in a metaphoric or symbolic mode whose presence disrupts the realist surface. (115)

Only in Letty Fox: Her Luck is there any metonymic representation of the sexual act; in all the other novels sexuality is displaced onto the metaphoric level. In The Man Who Loved Children, Louisa's dreams are sexual: she dreams of wells, symbolic of her inner space, and her desire for vengeance against her father is symbolized in the phallic image of a cutting scythe or pendulum which she operates to mow the earth. Mae's more erotic dreams (in Seven Poor Men of Sydney) reveal her sexual longings to Michael, but she, herself, fails to interpret them:

> "I keep on dreaming that my mother sends me for milk; I have to go through green paddocks and on a hillside there are always horses with glaring eyes and long tails which try to bite me. Once," she said, "I dreamed we were swimming together at Nielsen Park."
>
> "You love me without knowing it." (50)

In The Beauties and Furies, Elvira with her constant, languid sensuality believes "I am a dream" (76); in her sleep she

resembles "an immured citadel busy with the traffic of dreams" (31). Yet, like Mae, she never interprets her dreamwork because she remains buried in metaphor. Her daydreams illustrate her sexual nature symbolically (69), but by preferring metaphor to 'reality' she worships and pays obeisance to her body in an auto-eroticism that is "a bath of the soul." Here her "obscure images" are either phallic or yonic. If they suggest desire, they also symbolize a fear of destruction or invasion:

> Then everything was dark, she was very tired and was soon wrapped in a warm half-slumber, wherein she dreamed of nothing, but seemed to be suspended, a full-blooded great body in a dark scene where an obscure tower or veiled monument took the centre of a vast colourless plain. . . . She saw a rod with two headless snakes emerging from a dusky ivory egg, jagged lightning issuing from the great letter O, flame coming from a periwinkle's shell, a lake at the end of a row of dark clipped trees, a sea-lion creeping slowly towards her with melancholy head, a mushroom turning into a silver pheasant, a long stretch of yellow and black strand with the fringed sea invading it on one side and the black coarse grass on the other. (69)

To Gaston Bachelard, in The Poetics of Space, daydream is connected with the contemplation of grandeur.

> [This] produces an attitude that is so special, an inner state that is so unlike any other, that the daydream transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity. (183)

Bachelard is always too androcentric, too felicitous in his analysis of space. Stead depicts Elvira as tied corporeally, unable to transcend her position as a woman, trapped as she is within her body, her "navel philosophy" (176). Elvira, immobilized in a "full-blooded great body" (69), seems buried.

Thus Stead denotes that to remain buried within the metaphorical mode is to have one's sexuality and freedom stifled, to live statically, mirroring how (female) metaphor is enclosed in (male) discourse. These tropes cannot make discourse disappear, and the female characters cannot move beyond the gendered roles imposed on them. Elvira tells both Paul and Oliver:

> "There is no such thing as a spiritual renaissance, at least not for a woman. We are too much nailed to a coffin of flesh, our souls are only plants, they are rooted in an earth of flesh. We need a home, security, comfort for our flesh before the mind can grow. That is because we are the carriers of life. . . ." (175)

Such a life can only signify death as Elvira acknowledges implicitly when she berates Paul for keeping her "like a specimen in a test-tube" or "a foetus in alcohol" (151). The men associate her beauty with death: to Oliver she acts "'as if [her] beauty were only a mask over some embalmed body, like the painted faces over the sleeping princesses in their mummy-cases'" (99). Marpurgo considers death to be Elvira's fate: "'Shadowy beauty steeped in quiescence needing lifelong slumber, whose name on the tomb will be the most blatant fact in her history'" (142-43).

In the world of The Beauties and Furies the potential of married or marriageable women is repeatedly described as buried, unexplored, even submarine. Marpurgo's wife writes to him that she has lived "under water in the calm pool of [his] life" (66) and Sara has "the complexion of an empty sea-pool in a sandstone rock" (160). These women all appear to live under an anaesthetic that precludes any fulfilment of erotic desire. In Miss Herbert (The Suburban Wife), Eleanor's whole life resembles a dream which

she has dreamt herself; after promising to marry Heinz she suddenly reconsiders: "She was flustered and anxious, as if about to walk with a meek willing crowd into a prison: she had made a fatal promise in a dream and was only now waking up" (85). Thus a woman who neglects to interpret metaphor makes of her whole life an uninterpreted dream. After Eleanor's marriage she sinks back into a dream state where her sexuality is repressed by her views of the sanctity and serious nature of marriage; when Heinz informs her of his plans to leave her, she feels as if "she had awakened suddenly from a dream of complete happiness and love" (179). The "dream," here, signifies mere fantasy, for Eleanor's sexuality, like that of Elvira, has remained repressed in metaphor, never being transmitted into the fulfillment of desire.

The young Eleanor confessed to her friends her childhood experience with boys who took her into the bushes and "played" with her:

> "When I told Mumsy, she explained to me that my body was a temple that no one must ever touch till I married. She told me my husband would have a golden key to unlock the door." (8)

For her, the female body is sacrosanct. Mary Bird agrees that there are two sides to sex "The Taj Mahal and the boys in the bushes" (9) and subsequently for Eleanor these different experiences signify the split between female and male sexuality.

Although Eleanor in her twenties is sexually very active, she seems to experience no joy in her liaisons and tells her ex-schoolmistress that she is "striking a blow for freedom. The so-called moral system is just imposed on women by men" (29).

Eleanor, however, has been too conditioned by the moral system not to see passion as deathlike or as detracting from a woman. These metaphors of death recur and recall the metaphors associated with Elvira. She feels that her potential lover Thieme was touching "a cold inky well in which the self she enjoyed would be lost" (67) and her first encounter with him links Eros and Thanatos:

> At the same time, she felt a slight bruise on the left side of her heart and it seemed a shadow wheeled across her. She thought, that's like death. (43)

In the church at the Count's wedding the proximity of Thieme occasions a moment of oneiric consciousness of death:

> Aren't there a lot of us on earth at present? But more dead: where have they all got to? Just streaming out into what's faraway. . . . Perhaps someone in this church will die tomorrow, even tonight. Perhaps he will or I will. Oh, no, no! (44-45)

Thieme describes her as "Venus unknown to Venus" because middle class mores have stifled her sensuality as she, herself, seems to acknowledge when she explains that she comes from the Herbert family and tells of the portrait of Caroline Advisa Herbert. "'I'm her dead image, she's my dead image, because she's dead'" (62). Stead seems to suggest that given a social formation that dispatches women into the place of the Other, a woman's sexuality can only be deathly and destructive of the woman, herself.

For Catherine, in Seven Poor Men of Sydney, death and sexuality also merge; when she experiences the storm with Fulke, with whom she is in love, she cries "'Come sweet sea!'" and then adds "'Come sweet death, I mean'" (136). Even more significantly,

Michael equates his love for Catherine and Catherine, herself, with death:

> "Put your face in your hands. Because you are not beauty, you are terror, you are destiny, what is destiny but death, and what else are you? If I ever kissed you, what would I have under my lips but the very substance and moment of death and dissolution?
>
> "I have no meaning in ordinary life and this is what releases me from being silent about my love, and it is what makes me love, perhaps, the image of myself: it is a hunger and lust for death at root." (274)

Sentenced to death by this incestuous passion, by the brother she loves, Catherine lives with death though she says bravely to Baruch "we are insensible to great disasters, because we have met them often and often on our path in company with death" (150). Catherine's life is informed by deathliness so that, metaphorically, the only interpretation of the end of the novel is that she has chosen death figuratively, if not literally, by going to live in the Forestville asylum.

In Letty Fox: Her Luck deathliness, associated with gender roles, seems to be the natural position of women without the husbands necessary to validate their existence socially. Letty's mother, abandoned by Solander Fox, mourns '"Dead to society! How can a dead woman like me bring up your children? Soon you'll want to give them to that woman. She's a concubine but she's alive"' (100). Similarly, Mrs Montrose, whose husband has a lover, appears "dead" to Letty. Jacky's sexuality is deathly; she seeks out death in the person of Simon Gondych, years her senior, who is prefigured by her dreams of a submarine skeleton and an underground tomb of the Pharoahs. She appears mesmerized

by the thought of him as an "old beetle," his "wrinkled, stone cold hand" fondling her breasts and feels touched by the "'wing of a great thing--death or love, or Lucifer'" (436). She fantasizes about making friends with the Angel of Death who will then not "lay hands" on Simon.

That Stead associates female passion, metaphorically, with death in these instances suggests that women's sexuality can never signify anything other than onanism or the termination of life when they have only the deadening images of other women, stultified by repression, to emulate. As these women are cancelled out, so any woman writer's desire for a metaphorical space outside of male discourse seems spurious. Such a trope can never really cause male reality to disappear.

Desire and passion are not always linked metaphorically with death. In For Love Alone the predominant metaphor for sexuality in both narratorial voice and dialogue is "madness." When other characters castigate Teresa for her madness the narrator, like Phyllis Chesler in Women and Madness, seems to be linking this so-called "madness" either to the acting out of the devalued female role or to "the total or partial rejection of one's sex-role stereotyping" (56). Chesler notes that:

> [F]or a woman to be healthy she must 'adjust' to and accept the behavioural norms for her sex even though these kinds of behaviour are generally regarded as less socially desirable. . . . The ethic of mental health is masculine in our culture. (68-69)

For Love Alone similarly criticizes this culture, but Teresa is also portrayed as mad by the narrator and here Stead links the protagonist to many other female heroes of women's writing

driven to some sort of "madness" through prolonged sexual repression. (Gilbert and Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic consider at length these represented forms of madness.) No sympathetic analysis of women's status informs Teresa's family when they label her as mad--her father calls her a "witch" or a "beggar" and though her brother attributes her madness to being without a boy (288) he blames his sister for being too thin and unappealing. Years later Teresa considers that she belongs "to the race which is not allowed to reason" (460) and, at the time of her awakening adolescent sexual awareness, she believes that any sexual repression results in madness. At Harper's Ferry when she hears of an affianced man whose proposed marriage was ruled out by the onset of his madness she agonizes:

> "But how can they expect mad people to get better if they have no husbands and wives? Why, I should go mad if they shut me up that way." (161)

Aunt Bea, too, believes that her landlady's husband had gone mad because his wife had rejected him sexually; the narrator refers to the situation on Teresa's country walk when the man exposes himself as "this madness." Teresa's love affairs seem to render her mad, even though she is "acting out" the conventional roles for women rather than questioning these traditions: after sending her initial love letter to Jonathan Crow she is like a madwoman, and in her desire for Harry Girton she is "mad with love" (468).

In Seven Poor Men of Sydney Catherine's madness is not so much a concomitant of sexual repression (although she longs for Fulke and Baruch) as a judgement imposed on her by others, as

Chesler suggests "madness" is, because of her refusal to conform to expected roles for women in Sydney. In The Man Who Loved Children Louisa expresses feelings of madness when she is angry with her father's rule. Stead never glamourizes the "madness" of these women as a social statement. Rather, she depicts these female characters being judged as mad because they are deemed as Other by an androcentric society that lacks any understanding of women's difference. Catherine, Louisa, and Teresa are regarded as mad, or perceive themselves that way, whenever their strong feelings for politics or poetry or their sexual desires are not recognized by the social formation so that madness is a metaphor thrust on them from the outside.

Here Stead requires that her readers will share with the narrator what Max Black in Models and Metaphors calls "a system of associated commonplaces." In his "interaction view" of metaphor: "Metaphors can be supported by specially constructed systems of implications, as well as by accepted commonplaces; they can be made to measure and need not be reach-me-downs" (43). Stead's metaphorization of madness presupposes some common analysis of the social formation. Only a reader already critical of androcentric norms will perceive as a "commonplace" this depiction through dreams, death, and madness of a female sexuality which is often repressed. These metaphors resonate in other women's writing as well. Ted Cohen's observations in "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy" are worth noting:

> There is a unique way in which the maker and the appreciator of a metaphor are drawn closer to one another. Three aspects are involved: (1) the speaker issues a kind of concealed invitation; (2) the hearer

> expends a special effort to accept the invitation; and (3) the transaction constitutes the acknowledgement of a community. (6)

Other metaphorical commonplaces

Of course the usual "intimacy" cultivated between the writer and the reader of the constructed metaphor presupposes a "system of associated commonplaces" very different from that presupposed by a woman writer with a critical view of the androcentric social formation. Thus Stead, in her treatment of domestic and natural imagery, disfigures the (pre)dominant (male) figure of speech which is endemic in Gaston Bachelard's perception of a house or home in The Poetics of Space:

> Now my aim is clear: I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another. In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world. Before he is "cast into the world," as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle. A concrete metaphysics cannot neglect this fact, this simple fact, all the more, since this fact is a value, an important value, to which we return in our daydreaming. Being is already a value. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house. (6-7)

The androcentric view endows the house with female characteristics, viewing it as a giant womb to nurture the "man" who is provided with a cradle and the warmth of "the bosom of the house." Bachelard is confident that without the (female) home

"man would be a dispersed being." Yet, the house with its concomitant female attributes can only be "felicitous space" from an unperceptive masculist view.

Stead's depiction of woman and home is never that they are "felicitous." Throughout her canon the routine of housework stultifies female characters who have no identity other than that of the building in which they live and labour. Housework contradicts any possible intellectual development as Stead has the Mathematician in The Salzburg Tales realize when he furnishes his house sparsely, like "a hermit's cell, so that his wife could polish her mind and not brass fittings" (32). The women in Seven Poor Men of Sydney who have never had the opportunity to "polish" their minds define themselves by their maternal and domestic roles and are entrapped, as well, in their religion, their Blakean rose gardens and their marriages.

> [Mrs Baguenault] saw the workaday world through a confessional grille, as a weevil through the hole he has gnawed in a nut. It might have opened to the thrust, that grille, if she had had the will, or if her husband had had the patience to teach her; but he had not, he thought too little of her brains.
>
> Within, her heart was a stuffed chasuble continually repeating "Om, Om," with censers swinging and the tin cash-box clinking, making a sort of perpetual low mass in her soul--if she had a soul; but it was no soul, it was a dried leaf. (66)

In Cotters' England and For Love Alone the sisters of the protagonists similarly define themselves by their household roles and seem to function as opposites to the female heroes who move beyond these impositions.

In The Man Who Loved Children, most notably, Stead shows

how the woman within the house identifies with it and becomes tyrannized by it, herself becoming a "dispersed being."[1] This house is Henny's prison; in it, her life, sacrificed for her children, becomes a "torture cell" (119); when she mutters in her room she sounds like "the rusty stirring of some weed-grown sea-animal, bottom-prisoned by blindness" (151). From her oppressed position she identifies with an invading mouse, feeling "involuntarily that the little marauder was much like herself, trying to get by" (50). Her world is so legislated by domestic detail that the children appear to "rush off like water down the sink" (50) thus inspiring her comment "A dirty cracked plate: that's just what I am!" (50). The move to the decayed, water-logged Spa House with its "leprous sink," "watery floor" and "reek of weeds forever damp" is fatal for Henny, and Louisa's literary celebrations of these imperfections elicit some sort of breakdown of hope in her stepmother; subsequently, Henny abandons any desire for domestic order--never Sam's fantasized "ministering angel" she becomes a "charming, slatternly witch, their household witch" (376) and rather than a felicitous domestic space the house represents "a dark cavern of horrors" (376). Alienated from the family and her surroundings, she recapitulated "a dozen times a week, 'I have no home--they only allow me a room here, but it is my room'" (375).

[1] Dorothy Green, "The Man Who Loved Children: Storm in a Tea Cup," The Australian Experience: Critical Essays on Australian Novels, Ed. W. S. Ransom (Canberra: Australian National U, 1974) 174-208, has also noted how bound Henny was by the duties of a housewife.

At least in Tohoga House she had been a "household anarchist" who challenged Sam, the "household czar," but rapidly she has experienced defeat. Metaphorically inundated by the constraints of her family, hugely pregnant, feeling "drowned in a nausea so deep" that she barely acknowledges Sam's return from Malaya she now "had swum beyond all Pollitry and their considerations: she was on the edge of the maelstrom and was about to sink down, down, circling" (278). Drowning as a metaphor for being overwhelmed by the quotidian dramatizes Henny's sense of being overome by familial demands.[2] Stead also uses an anthropophagic metaphor to depict Henny's predicament. Her strength depleted by the child in her womb, Henny relinquishes all sense of her individuality, although even before her pregnancy she had felt that the children "were simply eating up her flesh as they had when they were at her breast, no less" (119), a cannibalistic image that belies the joys of motherhood.

Henny's nightmarish poverty-stricken, child-ridden existence coalesces most strikingly in three symbols (or what Lodge would call metaphorical metonymies) that Stead uses to suggest the domestic entrapment of her life: the cup that she uses to tell fortunes, her game of patience, and the fish that Sam stews at Spa House. Sam had insisted that his children buy the kitsch heavy cup engraved with roses and "Mother" for Henny's birthday. Gazing at it she plays with perspective and rejuvenates

[2] This drowning metaphor recurs in women's writing; Kate Chopin, The Awakening (1899; New York: Avon, 1972) has the female hero commit suicide by drowning, partly to dramatize this woman's sense of being inundated by societal constraints.

a metaphorical cliché by metonymizing it:

> As Henny sat before her teacup and the steam rose from it and the treacherous foam gathered, uncollectible round its edge, the thousand storms of her confined life would rise up before her, thinner illusions on the steam. She did not laugh at the words 'a storm in a teacup.' Some raucous, cruel words about five cents misspent were as serious in a woman's life as a debate on war appropriations in Congress. . . . (45)

It is fitting that this item of domesticity which symbolizes her "confined life" is instrumental in her death when Henny drinks tea from a cup, realizing that Louisa had laced it with cyanide.

Her death is prefigured, too, in the card game which symbolizes her life. Solitaire becomes her solace. Shuffling the cards with "a sound like a distant machine gun" she believes that "life was a rotten deal with men holding all the aces" (72). When her game of double patience came out without her cheating she "looked helplessly at the eight stacks of cards before her, each with a king on top. The game that she had played all her life was finished; she had no more to do: she had no game" (472). Similarly, the marlin comes to emblematize Henny's life of domestic chaos and the way it overwhelms her. On a syntagmatic level the fish is reduced to bottles of stinking oil, by Sam and the children; on a paradigmatic level Sam, at Spa House, is in his "fishy element," the children "flickered, leaped, and played like fish" (466) and Henny emphasizes the comparison quite specifically in her bitter statement "'my life has been one blessed fish chowder!'" (469). Sam's schemes, as usual, take cognizance of humanity at the expense of Henny, for he had "intended to oil the universe with the game, and make the

luxurious sportsmanlike spearfish work for mankind" (413). Like the kings on top of the stacks of cards, Sam triumphs in his ridiculous scheme, metaphorically killing the woman whose domestic existence has transformed her from a southern belle into an exhausted, alienated "witch" imprisoned in her marriage which she thinks of "as an ignorant, dissatisfied but helpless slave did of slavery" (458).[3]

In choosing the subsidiary subject in the metaphors depicting Henny from domestic detail, Stead not only illustrates Henny's static position enclosed in the family house that is never a home for her, but she also subverts the metaphorical practice of the dominant discourse which would tend to glorify the nurturing qualities of the home, ignoring the woman behind this positive symbol.[4] Stead's narratives, as I have illustrated, never depict the housewife's role favourably. Rather, they foreground the social status and psychology of the woman in the house. Thus, the metaphors contain and encapsulate a sociological critique of the social formation that victimizes women in domestic labour.

Still other metaphors in Stead's novels interrogate the comparison of women to domesticated birds, which obtains in a

[3] To interpret Henny in this way is not to reach the impasse of Graham Burns, "The Moral Design of The Man Who Loved Children", Critical Review (Melbourne) 14 (1971): 38-61 who finds Henny problematic because she vacillates between "personal shrillness" and general speeches about women: "It is hard to know quite what to make of this kind of feminism in the novel" (46).

[4] Max Black Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1962) 38f. explains that in the metaphor 'man is a wolf' man is the principal subject, wolf the subsidiary subject (38f).

paternal discourse that displays women only as sign. Ellen Moers in Literary Women notes this common practice more widely in women's writing:

> One bird metaphor, however--that of the nesting-bird for motherhood--which so naturally occurs to male writers, seems striking by its absence from women's literature, or by the bitterness with which it is used to imply rejection of the maternal role. (247)

Stead subverts these dominant bird metaphors in connection with both Elvira in The Beauties and Furies and, very differently, in connection with Nellie in Cotters' England.

Elvira is compared repeatedly to a dove, but the reverberation of the primary and subsidiary subject never suggests a celebration of this image but merely an ironic appreciation of this: when she sits "cosily but mutely, like an egg laid in a tussock" (174) she is actually revelling in the altercation between her husband and her lover. When Coromandel is overcome by a feeling of worship for Elvira she looks on Elvira "as one looks on a simple, foolish, dirty, lustful dove in a compliant green forest" (317). Next to Blanche, whom she perceives as a firebird, Elvira feels herself "a dowdy little domesticated bird, like a silver wyandotte, say" (129). Blanche, the prostitute, with her "kestrel face" has the "lovely face of a bird of prey" (220) as she swoops on Elvira immured in her naïvety.

Moers tentatively suggests that "[t]he more feminist the literary conception . . . the larger, wilder, and crueler come the birds" (246). While I would not maintain that Cotters' England is more feminist in conception than The Beauties and Furies the

novel certainly evinces more anger at the general oppression of women (and men) in the working class. Predatory birds become a metaphor for those with power. The tormented Caroline asks desperately whether all society is made up of "vultures and ravens"; Nellie feels that "society is a vulture to the lonely soul" (156). Nellie, herself, is birdlike, compared variously to a blackbird, a marshbird, and a raven when she is in the Hall of Mirrors. Her birdness suggests darkness, death, and rapacity as she dominates Caroline who, in Nellie's analysis, resembles a bird in a cage: "But can the bird break the iron bars by fluttering? You are likely to see bloodied and broken wings; and the close tendrils of parental love were in this case iron bars" (16). In this metaphor of the bird in the cage Stead is not so much subverting the dominant metaphor as opening up other dimensions of meaning. Similarly, when Peggy is compared to "a white bird with a trailing wing, a bit between spirit and flower" (183) the subsidiary subject suggests fragility, a link with nature, even an other-worldliness.

Stead also uses nature as a fund of metaphor in a way that subverts or foregrounds the dominant idea of nature as female (and culture as male). As Annette Kolodny points out in The Lay of the Land America's (and, I would add, Europe's) "oldest and most cherished fantasy" involves:

> a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of land as essentially feminine--that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification--enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction. Such imagery is archetypal wherever we find it; the soul's home . . . is that place where the

> conditions of exile--from Eden or from some primal harmony with the Mother--do not obtain; it is a realm of nurturance, abundance, and unalienated labor within which all men are truly brothers. (4)

Stead obviously undercuts the dominant analogy of female to nature in a number of her narratives: in The Salzburg Tales nature conceals "the sounds of female madness" (226) and in The Man Who Loved Children Sam's concept of nature "licking at his feet like a slave, like a woman, that he had read of somewhere, that washed the feet of the man she loved and dried them with her hair" (475) is accorded ironic treatment by the narrator. In the novels Stead's distaste for such simplistic feminization or sentimentalization of nature is obvious, but her attitude fluctuates. The wilderness or countryside may be, as in For Love Alone, a place of stultification or horror but it is also where Teresa comes to some sexual and female consciousness. In House of All Nations and in The People with the Dogs the country suggests a prelapsarian, socialistic ideal but it also, in the latter novel, involves slothfulness. In Seven Poor Men of Sydney Catherine seems entirely at home in pastoral surroundings, but Michael's experience of nature is phantasmagoric and so tormented that nature, itself, seems to preside over his self-inflicted death.

That women writers often perceive nature subversively as "a source of power and energy" is the subject of Dorothy Jones's essay "'A Kingdom and a Place of Exile': Women Writers and the World of Nature" which notes:

> For women writers who make it their theme, the world of nature has yielded valuable metaphors for expressing

> aspects of female experience. Traditional imagery of the lover taking possession of the beloved's body as a territory he annexes for his profit and delight can be turned around so that the portrayal of nature exploited and misused becomes analogous to the way women's lives become distorted through subordination and subjection, with the added implication that society forces women to lead unnatural lives. The identification of women with nature, can, however, be a powerful means of evoking possibilities of self-determination as characters are seen participating in the power of nature, allowing it to restore them in body and mind so they can learn to reshape and command their own lives. (271)

Stead's metaphorical use of nature either as a criticism of the social formation or as a source of power for women is most prevalent in For Love Alone. For the young adolescent Teresa, nature is her educator in her passionate relationship with her surroundings at the bay, her "voluptuous swimming," and her long wakeful nights which promote "profound pleasure," but nature also provides Teresa with a metaphor of woman as "a hunter without a forest" (75). In her negative analysis of the social formation, which requires women to be married early, no matter to whom, Teresa complains of how women are alienated from their own bodies. The woman's recompense is to assert her sexuality in collusion with nature which is what Teresa does:

> In that room, in the furnace, she understood herself and knew what was wrong with the world of men. She felt like a giantess, immense, somehow growing like an incommensurable flower from a root in the earth, pouring upwards into the brazen sky, "the woman clothed with the sun." At this hour each day, the sun, reckless, mad with ardour, created her newly. This was the hour when she lived as a heart lives inside a beast, she was the blood and the convulsion; outside was a living envelope, the world. (100)

Nature is also the locale which provides Teresa with a symbiotic education into the horror and meaninglessness of life:

she cannot separate herself from the dreadful unearthly cry she hears in the country with her cousin and wonders if it emanated from her own mouth, so much does she identify with "the things on the land ... some martyred and bleeding field, or a giant old tree being murdered in the wood there" (158). She questions "'Was it the howl of empty Creation, horrified at being there with itself in its singleness? Or is it the cry of the chase I am on . . .?'" (159). As Teresa and Ellen are in pursuit of a man for Ellen this cry symbolizes to Teresa a woman berating the man-made "law" for not permitting any expression of her own natural instincts in a free sexuality rather than in the bound, legalized relationship of marriage. If this countryside signifies for Teresa merely death and an "empty creation," the wilderness never proffering any nurturance, she had, at the beginning of her earlier train journey, experienced the "joy" as well as the "horror" of the scenery. Her journey, then, is a rite of passage: "Alone, she found the way out, which alone does not lead to blindness, years of remorse and hungry obscurity" (137). This is the beginning of a "grand perilous journey" which involves the extremes of "joy" and "horror."

In the Great Valley which is "fruitful, silent as paradise" Teresa encounters a "wicked" old man who capers like a marionette in an "idiotic dance" exposing his genitals to her. In her virginal innocence Teresa thinks his penis a "kind of queer white flag" (165). Although she appears a misfit Eve in the postlapsarian Eden, her desire to experience life and sexuality, sordid though they might be, mocks the one-dimensional picture-book vision of her father, who eulogizes the beauty of the

word "sex" to a "loving man":

> "On the other side of the barrier of sex is all the splendour of internal life, a garden full of roses, if you can try to understand my meaning, sweet-scented, fountains playing, the bluebird flying there and nesting there. There are temptations there but the man sure of himself and who knows himself can resist them and direct his steps into the perfumed, sunny, lovely paths of sex." (12)

In patriarchal discourse only the male is given a voice in describing "sex" that is ridiculously romantic; his logocentrism ignores the reality not only of the woman's experience but also the decadence and perversion of the sexuality forced onto women either extrinsically or intrinsically.

For Teresa, nature involves initiation, a criticism of a social formation hostile to women, as well as being a source of power for her, from her immersion, quite literally, in nature when she swims in the bay in Sydney to her dramatic realization at the mill in England of Jonathan's worthlessness. Subsequently, even her ecstatic affair with Harry Girton takes place in Oxford bordering on the countryside.

In Stead's narratives, nature is not used exclusively as a metaphor for a woman who is either desecrated or powerful; in Seven Poor Men of Sydney Catherine may feel marginally at home in the countryside but this connection is never specifically sustained. In Cotters' England where the landscape seems taken over by urban and industrial development Nellie desires to transmute London into a place more closely connected to nature. She tries to persuade Eliza that they could "'live together in the wilderness of London and it will be an ideal forest, it was a lover and his

lass with a hey and a ho and a heynonino!'" (344). In echoing Rosalind-Ganymede, Nellie seems to propose some practice of androgyny, almost as though a conflation of the forest and the city symbolizes the combination of male and female. In House of All Nations, however, nature and the countryside, which connect with socialist ideals (as in The People with the Dogs) are very specifically masculine in their healing, Edenic properties.

In this novel Stead does not subvert the dominant view of nature. The symbolically named Jean Frère has a garden with restorative and nurturant properties for the Parisians exhausted by the world of commerce. The garden and the socialist ethos of the people there are very much ideals that proffer a counterbalance to the sinister pantomime of the "mythomaniacs" at the Bertillon bank. Similarly, in The People with the Dogs nature provides the setting for socialist principles although these are not so specifically masculine. Edward's grandfather may have started Whitehouse ("Peace, liberty, a roof for everyone, all claims equal" (7)) in order to emulate the community at Oneida, but it is peopled by the Massine sisters. Here all forms of life exist organically (even the car) and symbiotically: the trees are sentient and the vine human with its "dark communication of sinew forming the body of a great being" (151). Much of the metaphor of the novel derives from natural images and Edward's moment of heightened consciousness experienced at the May Day march is described in natural terms (108) as if, by being socialistically inspired, humans become more closely allied with nature. Again, socialism is associated with Edenic properties, but although

Stead idealizes the Massine community as she does Jean Frère's circle, the former is also satirized for its Beulah-like characteristics exemplified in the vine which not only chokes the pear trees and the garden but which Edward regards as "the sloth that stretches back into my childhood and had its foot in my cradle" (152). The depiction of nature in these last two novels discussed seems not to interrogate the dominant view of nature as pastoral and idyllic, but nature is never exploited and it does constitute some criticism of capitalism in House of all Nations. Only when Stead associates nature closely with female characters is nature depicted subversively as "a source of power and energy" that suggests possibilites of self-determination for these women who are critical of the androcentric social formation.

Metaphorical desires for transcendence

Other metaphors connected with the country, though still associated with the female, have different significance. Here I would like to discuss Stead's metaphorical use of "country" not when it is related to nature (and as opposed to town) as I have been discussing it above, but when country signifies one's place of birth or habitation. In "Another View of the Homestead" Christina Stead refers to Australia as "the 'other country' which I always had in me" (18). Significantly in her novels only Australia, in Seven Poor Men of Sydney and For Love Alone, is mythologized and connected to aboriginal time or likened to classical Greece respectively. The metonymic depiction of

Australia is, of course, portrayed as far from ideal, because it never provides for the central characters any place to love and feel at home in. A sense of belonging is usually located within a human relationship. For Teresa, first Crow then Quick is her "country," for Nellie, George is her "fatherland"; the peripatetic Madame Sarine (in The People with the Dogs), however, maintains "where my cello is, there's my home." Stead always thought of her husband as her home, and to him she was his "native land."[5]

I would postulate that in women's writing their use of metaphor involves not only an undercutting of much of the metaphor of the dominant tradition, as I have shown in connection with Stead, but also that their metaphor evinces, much more than in male writing, a strong impulse to a space of belonging, possibly because they lack the feeling of being at home in their social and literary environments. Certainly, Gilbert and Gubar note, in The Madwoman in the Attic, the prevalence of a place in Victorian woman's writing that signifies a "mother country," a lost Atlantis "of her literary heritage" (99). They argue:

> That women have translated their yearnings for motherly or sisterly precursors into visions of such a land is as clear as it is certain that this metaphoric land, like the Sibyl's leaves and the woman writer's power, has been shattered and scattered. (100)

[5] Christina Stead, interview with Giula Giuffré, Stand 23.4 (n.d.): 22-29 records that Stead agreed with her suggestion that her husband had been her home (26).

Christina Stead, interview with John B. Beston, World Literature Written in English 15 (1976): 87-95 quotes Stead: "Bill said to me, 'You are my native land'" (94-95).

While I have noted, in chapter three, how in Stead's canon women's creativity involves a search for a supportive and inspirational mother figure, a metaphorical "country" cannot be as clearly specified as Gilbert and Gubar would have it. This mythical "country" in Stead's narratives involves, more generally, a sense of peace and of belonging, and an existence without struggle which would suggest a narratorial impulse towards some kind of ideal, beyond that of a socialist Utopia or a male lover. It cannot, however, be equated so closely with a lost female tradition.

Metaphorically the women's search for belonging is often spatialized. Nellie explains to Caroline that "family love is painted as a smooth green shallow valley of comfort" but cautions that "'it's full of abysses; you've got to watch your step not to slip in'" (40). The young Letty Fox envisages marriage as a "safe harbour." Louisa divorces herself from the familial domestic chaos by engaging in her fantasies "as if going through a door into another world" (94). Thus, Harpers Ferry, which functions on the metonymic level, becomes transmuted for Louisa into a place of "revelation" which she visualizes as "a landscape to the far end of the sky--an antique, fertile, yeoman's country," (186). Similarly, the adolescent Teresa also divorces herself from the family home and lives in a fantasy world of her "favourite private movies." She yearns for a country beyond the quotidian; constrained by the "iron circle of the home and work" alone in her "eyeless room," she longs to reach

> some circle, some understandings in touch with these pleasures . . . for she knew these things were not thin

> black shapes of fantasy, but were real. It was a country from which she, a born citizen, was exiled. She struggled towards it. (85, emphasis added)

Years later in England when she is disappointed by the relationship with Jonathan Crow "she instantly sought yet another country" (330), and, although she thinks of France, this "country" has metaphorical resonance.

In thus spatializing desire or wishful feelings of belonging, Stead uses metaphor quite specifically to signify states that are attainable only in fantasy, never on the realistic level. Patricia Parker in "The Metaphorical Plot" points out how, for seventeenth century writers, metaphor was a sign of paradise lost and notes that in the current view, "Metaphor is here a 'plot' in both senses--a space of disorientation and discovery, and a mythos of transformation" (151). For Karsten Harries in "Metaphor and Transcendence":

> Metaphors speak of what remains absent. All metaphor that is more than an abbreviation for more proper speech gestures towards what transcends language. Thus metaphor implies lack. (82)

Some of Stead's metaphors also "speak of what remains absent." Where the subsidiary subject is drawn from the domestic or quotidian sphere the "reverberation" of the metaphor cannot point beyond this sphere to anything supra-normal or transcendent, but Stead's metaphors of nature, or the countryside as an alternative world that hearkens to some socialist communal Utopia, or the metaphors of the "country" as an ideal for a female character do take cognizance in their subsidiary subjects of a dimension beyond the everyday, a mystical dimension, a

paradise lost from which the protagonist has been exiled. Transcendentalism would seem to fit uneasily with determinism, but usually in Stead's texts, where metaphors suggest a religious or spiritual dimension, a split occurs between the metaphoric and the metonymic: when metaphors evince a visionary outlook they are often undercut by the harshness of the narrative voice legislating the metonymic furthering of the plot.

Stead's narrative structures appear not to belie her deterministic ethos, because the metaphors are usually interrogated by the metonymic text. What is surprising, however, in the quasi-materialist ethos of Stead's novels is just how many subsidiary subjects in the metaphors derive from a spiritual or even Christian reference. On the one hand, to regard Stead's use of these metaphors as expressing what Frank Kermode, in Romantic Image, celebrates as the "radiant truth out of space and time" would be, simplistically, to ignore the ironic context; on the other hand, though these metaphors may be undermined by the irony of the narrative voice, they do still reveal a desire, within an atheistic ethos, for the mystical. Stead maintained that she had no interest in Christianity and when asked if there was a "realm of transcendence in her work" she replied "'I'm interested in people here and now. I have not even any moral views'" (Interview with Giula Giuffré, 24-25). Yet her texts belie this negation of transcendence.

In Stead's narratives Christian metaphors proliferate, even though a great many of the Christian references occur in the character's narrated monologue or quoted interior monologue or dialogue. Rather than the narrator, it is Teresa who thinks of

Jonathan Crow as a Christ figure and as monastic; it is Quick who regards Jonathan as a "devil incarnate" with his "satanic depths" of mind; it is Teresa who feels Quick had the "face of an angel" and, in turn, he mythologizes her as a Madonna in a frame (much to her anger). Thus, one could argue for some displacement of the Christian imagery on to the characters and absolve the narrative voice from implication in any desire for such subsidiary subjects, but the narrator also indulges in Christian metaphor, and, uncharacteristically, this practice is not interrogated by the metonymic text. Teresa's namesake is St Teresa of Avila who introduced new meditative practices and Teresa writes a Testament resembling meditation procedure; the station resembles a cathedral, with its arches and clerestories when Teresa catches a train to Narara; Jonathan Crow's initials are those of Jesus Christ and although, generally, any likeness he might share with Christ is subverted by irony, the narrator reveals some sympathy for the younger Jonathan who travels his "Calvary Road" to where he lives in his "martyrdom of penury" (194). The point of view here might be that of Teresa's narrated monologue, but, subsequently, in a quasi-Christian description of Teresa, the voice is more likely that of the narrator.

> The light that streamed out of her eyes was like the fresh sky light that comes through the windows in country churches where they have no idols or images. But it was not in the conversion of Jonathan that she believed now, but in her coming martyrdom. (422)

The text interrogates the Christian metaphor where Jonathan Crow is concerned, but Teresa, in spite of the licentious pagan stage

she passes through, (only mentally of course) remains generally above censure suggesting that Stead, through Teresa, evinces a desire for some purity that is never undercut.

In The Man Who Loved Children, however, the Christian imagery may speak of narratorial desire for a "plot" elsewhere but the metonymic text detracts from any direct suggestion of transcendence. Harpers Ferry seems a partial exception, for, although the Bakens have "holy holies" and Grandfather Israel's religion is "cruel and revolutionary," the overall impression of the extended Baken family is one of openness and love, and their religiosity is not satirized as is Sam's. The place is presented as positively drawing people together in an "Israel of the meeting of the waters" and what criticism Louisa feels is overcome by her overwhelming sense of belonging, her experience that she is "no more called forsaken" (181). Here, also, Louisa encounters seminal influences in her life: The Pilgrim's Progress and Paradise Lost, the former emblematic of her questing and the latter of the loss of a family which would have been provided by her mother, as well as the loss of childhood innocence with Louisa coming into adolescence with its concomitant sexual turmoil.

Stead handles the Christian metaphors with Louisa as principal subject very differently from the Christian metaphors associated with Sam, who is a Puritan "holily clean"; his pretensions to fashion his own family paradise are spurious: "The sun went down in yellow pulp and Sam's New Jerusalem was dissolved in milk soup" (159). In his Eden, Henny is a wily Eve, a devil whom he blames for dragging him into the "slime" when he

wished only to live in the realms of thought. With his first wife safely dead, he can fantasize that life with her would have been a "paradise," but otherwise he finds women in his prelapsarian Eden contaminating unless they are asexual. He fears Louisa's adolescence as "one of the beasts of Revelations" (341).

His Christian fantasies do not confine themselves to the Old Testament: he regards himself as a messiah, Henny mocks him for being "the little, tin Jesus" (285) and in Malaysia he fancies that people took him "as something next to a god" (245). When he loses his job he takes on, in Saul Pilgrim's words, an "air of Christian martyrdom" (323). Sam sees himself as a Christ figure, but the narrator never endorses his belief, always depicting this facet of his character ironically. When Henny goes to Washington, Stead links capitalism and religion as complementary aspects of the oppressive patriarchy that subjugates Henny:

> Her poverty was naked on the empty streets, and if no one walked abroad she felt all the more ghastly, like a wretched sinner in the sight of God. For Washington is Heaven, and Henny, disfigured, burdened with shameful secrets, felt like a human being would feel on first entering the sight of the angels. She detested perennial Heaven, Sinai's thunder, the new Jersualem's powerful hierarchy; she felt it was the Eden of fleshpot men and ugly women striving for God knows what ugly, unhewn, worthy ends, not for the salvation of miserable creatures like herself. (118-19)

The narrator obviously sympathises with Henny's lack of power and treats the religious imagery with irony.

In Cotters' England, however, the narratorial treatment of the religious metaphor does not suggest irony. A close reading of

metaphor delineating Nellie's inherent evil in Christian terms reveals censure, for Nellie, in postlapsarian Cotters' England, resembles both Eve and Satan, as well as a Faustian hero willing to go to the depths of depravity (as in the perversions of the Jago circle). Lacking a dialectic of good and evil, the milieu of the novel is Manichean with evil dominating over good. Narratorial desires may point to the other half of the good/evil dialectic but these are evident only in Caroline's suicide. Her death finally comes to symbolize her quest for perfection in a return to the innocence of childhood: she dies by jumping "onto a terrain of the sort she had always liked to play in when a child, clay, lime and sandpits, wheelbarrows, piles of bricks, and plenty of lost nails everywhere." (298) Her death will make sense of life; she writes to Nellie that death will be "glorious power" equating it with living, "quiet rushing over the edge out thousands of stars so many that they are daylight, all lives stars, myriads are one" (304).

This vision of death may recall a Bergsonian impulse for connection, but Nellie, who goads Caroline into suicide, thinks only of a sacrifice in her honour. She wishes to get Caroline to "confess" so she can "absolve" her and declaims to Caroline, like a demonic prophet, "beware of the false vision" (258). Her idea of sacrifice seems to derive from Christian mythology for she tells Caroline that "the most beautiful soul is a woman standing on the scaffold" (295). Like Sam, Nellie wishes to gain power by imposing her vision on others but she succeeds more dramatically than he ever did.

The Christian metaphor suggests no ideal here, as it might in

For Love Alone and The Man Who Loved Children, only an evil. In no other novels does Christian metaphor occur so centrally, although when Letty Fox mythologizes her greatest lover, Luke Adams, she regards him as having some pact with the devil in kidnapping her soul, and he is "the moonlight wraith, the demon-lover, the eternal Adam, the faun with his oaten pipe" (343). In The Little Hotel notions of heaven and hell recur: for Mrs Trollope the hotel is "like heaven" on a sunny morning, and hell is staying with the doctor and Gliesli. Heaven and hell are immanent and contingent. Arguably, the use of the terms heaven and hell here are mere clichés, yet one cannot dispute the impulse in the earlier novels towards some Christian transcendence of the everyday, no matter how much it is subverted by the metonymic text.

Conclusion

Stead uses metaphors, variously, to suggest a character's sexuality, a subversion of dominant metaphor, an impulse to transcendence. Unifying all these functions of metaphor is a particular sense of a woman writing and being conscious of male discourse which encloses her just as the represented reality entraps the female characters of the novels. To read the private voice of metaphor is to understand the woman writer's desire for another language, but this desire is inserted within the antipathetic context of male discourse and the ideology of the dominant literary tradition. Thus Stead portrays women who experience their sexuality only through metaphor as unable to

express themselves in a realistic mode, because they are regarded as Other, mere mirrors to reflect the norm of male sexuality.

Stead's use of metaphor to interrogate the commonplaces of the dominant literary tradition is some compensation for women's burial in metaphor. Inviting the reader to understand new commonplaces promotes the acknowledgement of a community of writer and reader. That other metaphors reveal desires for a country elsewhere or a spiritual dimension also suggests a coalition of writer and reader and an impulse to supercede male-legislated 'reality.' To read metaphor as a female figure desirous of making male discourse disappear transforms metaphor, itself, into a space of desire. Only if one reads Stead's metaphors with this aspect in mind can the narratives speak of utopian longings that the metonymic text never takes cognizance of.

Chapter Six

Plot and Closure: Bildung and Repetition.

If women writers in conflict with paternal metaphor write differently from those in the dominant tradition, their narrative endings will be important in signifying the difference of their texts, both mimetically and poetically. Endings, of course, reveal the fate which the writer ultimately assigns to her characters as well as to the act of narrative itself. Alice Jardine in "Pre-Texts for the Transatlantic Feminist" notes that, usually, women writers are reluctant to experiment with technique, as many critics have observed. She cites the psychoanalytic explanation, which uses the Oedipal model: "a girl is gratified by the symbolic order of the father--it is only in this way that she is recognized as the rival of the mother" (232). A woman writer's "respect for form" may, of course, be manifested in various ways, one of which "seems to be an effort to enclose the text in a structure--closed, 'well-formed'--as a pronounced emotive emphasis" (232).

Thus, one would expect that the ideology underlying Stead's narrative form would demand some attainment of closure and stasis. But the ideology of the narrated has also to be taken cognizance of, and here Stead most obviously reveals her vision of woman's place and potential within the social formation, the mimetic representation of which might not cohere with the closural impulses of a form that self-consciously aims for correctness and closure. In the endings of her narratives, Stead, consistent with the patterns I have noted in her writing,

challenges dominant traditions of plot and endings.

In Writing beyond the Ending Rachel Blau DuPlessis considers the resolution of a work to be a significant moment "of ideological negotiation" (3) and she notes:

> Any resolution can have traces of the conflicting materials that have been processed within it. It is where subtexts and repressed discourses can throw up one last flare of meaning; it is where the author may sidestep and displace attention from the materials that a work has made available. (3)

What interests me in Stead's texts and what will constitute the substance of this chapter is how the resolution of the narrative reveals these "conflicting materials," in the split between mimesis and poesis. The criteria I shall be using to discuss the "ideological negotiation" inherent in closural form are those pointed out by Barbara Herrnstein Smith in her seminal critical text on closure, Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End. Though she is discussing poetry, her terms are transferrable to narrative. In her analysis, closure, which she defines as "the sense of stable conclusiveness" or "finality" of a work (2), may be reinforced thematically by the terminal quality of the theme and closural allusions; formally by monosyllabic diction, non-systematic recurrence of formal elements, metrical regularity, parallelism, and antithesis.

Only two of Stead's novels , For Love Alone and The Man who Loved Children, incorporate a woman's Bildung. The Bildungsromanen with their linear forms seem to deny formal closure by suggesting a genesis of character beyond the ending. Other texts are what I would term novels of repetition,

circularly shaped, ending almost where they began with the plot having taken a series of repetitive detours within that broader circle.[1] Not only do the characters keep neurotically repeating their lives, but they fail to learn from their experiences. The endings, then, are paradoxically non-endings because the repetition, which has its own momentum, contradicts the formal closure. Unlike the Bildungsromanen, these narratives have a static quality belying any sense of denouement.

In their open-endedness Stead's narratives do not attain satisfactory closure and may or may not suggest narrativity. Gerald Prince, in Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative, favours the teleological nature of narrative:

> Note that narrative is a privileged mode of ontological commentary and has strong penchants for genesis and eschatology. Note also that narrative--like other signifying systems aspiring to autonomy and wholeness--traditionally deploys itself between common opening and closing points in human life (birth and death, infancy and old age, waking up and going to sleep) and, more generally, favors inversion: inside to outside, happiness to unhappiness, poverty to wealth, ignorance to learning, and so on and so forth. (153-54)

Prince's comments are more pertinent to novels written in the dominant tradition; Stead's novels of repetition show no strong penchant for genesis, and the only eschatology, often, is that of repetition. Also, Prince's "common opening and closing points in human life" have elicited the reaction of recent women writers who have scripted alternative endings to quest plots. Rachel

[1] Rudolf Bader. "Christina Stead and the Bildungsroman," World Literature Written in English 23. 1 (1984): 31-39, maintains, quite spuriously, as I will show later, that Letty Fox: Her Luck is a Bildungsroman and that Letty can be placed in a continuum with Teresa and Louisa.

Blau DuPlessis notes that death or marriage were "once obligatory goals for the female protagonist" (142) but that twentieth century women writers are criticizing these conventions.

Stead scripts endings in marriage that can only be labelled as "dysphoric," whereas the Bildungsromanen end more "eupohorically" suggesting that she endorses the development of woman as artist. These are terms which I have borrowed from Nancy K. Miller who defines them in The Heroine's Text with reference to the eighteenth century novel:

> [T]he novels in the euphoric text end with the heroine's integration into society. . . . The heroine . . . moves in her negotiation with the world of men and money from "nothing" to "all" in a feminine variation of Bildung. In the dysphoric text, the novels end instead with the heroine's death in the flower of her youth. . . and the move is from "all" in this world to "nothing" . . . The heroine's text is plotted within this ideologically delimited space of an either/or closure, within the conventional rhetoric of the sociolect. (xi)

In Stead's sociolect, the euphoric and dysphoric comprise different characteristics from those noted by Miller: the euphoric ending involves Bildung, creativity, regeneration, progress, and narrative closure that makes life beyond the ending possible for the female hero; the dysphoric ending involves repetition for the woman character in such a way that negates her life and makes narrativity impossible. Being without awareness of their secondary position in the dominant society, these women are doomed to repeat their own and each other's patterns of Otherness. Annis Pratt, in Archetypal Patterns in Women's

Fiction, observes that Bildung usually has the ideal of fulfilment within a culture, but that in the woman's novel of development the hero is "radically alienated by gender-role norms from the very outset" (36). In Stead's novels of repetition female characters who conform to the androcentric views on women script their own dysphoric endings. Here marriage signifies merely the "liberation" of death, and death proffers no transcendence in the circularity of these women's lives. Only those women who challenge conventions which oppress them can inscribe euphoric endings to their texts.

In their treatment of marriage and death and in their endings which suggest either narrativity or types of closure, the stories published under the title The Puzzleheaded Girl suggest emblems for the novels. The story "The Puzzleheaded Girl" ends with the news of the death of Honor Lawrence, but because Debrett scarcely believes that she will not return as a "wraith or wanderer" her image is propelled beyond the closure of the story. Another woman's understanding of her symbolic significance as the "ragged wayward heart of a woman that doesn't want to be caught and hasn't been caught," as someone who has "never loved anyone" or "never was in love" (67) also suggests lack of closure. Honor is an absence. Constituted by negatives, she never settles, never works, cannot even be a mother because her husband's family take custody of the child; even her portrait is just of her head as though men cannot perceive her whole. Like the young Teresa, she is a naïf, a misfit, yet the rootless, passionless Honor shows up the conformists in society for their mindless work and their obsessive need for relationships that never last anyway.

Honor's narrative suggests a linear impulse beyond the ending and a lack of closure in the Bildungs plot. Because Honor is a critic of androcentric norms Stead does not script for her a finalised ending in marriage or death. Thus her story suggests a paradigm for other Stead narratives, though the ending is not euphoric.

Similarly, the story of Lydia in "The Dianas" depicts the more usual paradigm for Stead's texts, by suggesting terminal closure in the life of a woman. Obsessively desiring marriage, Lydia is prepared to end her own life by going to live at the ironically named Sound (described repeatedly as "quiet") with her husband who systematically closes her off from her mother and her friends, holding her in static subservience. Like a jealous father (she feels as if she grew up in his house) he cuts her off even from any female connections. Entirely passive, she seems to have a voice only to answer him in acquiescing to his proposal of marriage. Like so many other ideologically correct (in dominant terms) women in Stead's novels who choose marriage because that is the only ending they can envisage for themselves, she is imbued with a great will for the marriage to work. This ending in marriage, like the others, however, is dysphoric: Lydia, a failure as a representative of Diana, is no hunter or protector of women. Instead she lives her life in a lacuna of love and community, and her story closes in a state of quiescence.

Similarly, the marriages in the other stories of The Puzzleheaded Girl are dysphoric, making narrativity impossible. The future marriage of Maureen Thornton in "The Rightangled Creek" will benefit from the madness of Hilda Dilley, because

Maureen's father plans to take over the Dilley property, and Hilda's psychosis was precipitated by the nature of her marriage. In "Girl from the Beach" Linda seems to have arranged her marriage purely as a protection against George who, because of his age, suggests a repetition of the friend's father who had raped Linda as a child after she had showed him some stolen slippers. In Paris, she had determinedly displayed the spoils of her kleptomania to George, surely in a masochistic compulsion to repeat her experience of sexual abuse because of her misdemeanour. She had regarded her childhood kleptomania and the rape teleologically, because the slippers symbolise a stolen adult sexuality, associated as they are for her with the sounds of a couple making love. That she prefers to remain stultified in pre-pubescence is indicated by her marrying a childhood friend.

These stories that end in marriage, instead of incorporating a celebration as they would in the dominant tradition, suggest sterility and often merely repeat the neurotic patterns of the characters. They point to the endings of the novels of repetition which, though open-ended, lack narrativity. The story of "The Puzzleheaded Girl" suggests a paradigm for the Bildungsromanen with their lack of closure, when the linear impulse of the plot makes narrativity possible beyond the ending.

Novels of repetition: female characters

The ideologies of narrative and the narrated respectively are congruent in the novels of repetition, for here the form emblematizes the repetition inherent in the lives of the women

(and men) who lack the impetus to break the sterile, deathly pattern within which they are trapped. In these narratives, and here I would include all Stead's novels with the exceptions of the Bildungsromanen and The People with the Dogs, change is not a condition of the text. Gerald Prince's ideal of narrativity does not apply. In Seven Poor Men of Sydney, Letty Fox: Her Luck, and Miss Herbert (Suburban Wife), particularly, any development of or for the female protagonist is spurious, for each ends where she began. Not only do these endings "consume" their starting points, because no metamorphosis occurs in the novels, but the repetitious nature of the protagonists' lives points to the profound pessimism of the narratives. These texts are not developmental; chronology may progress but the psychology of the characters never changes and the plot does not unfold. Repetition is therefore a structural and thematic principle.

Stead's characters seem suspended in a state of immobility that only takes cognizance of recurrence rather than progression. This has, of course, implications for the narrative form. Barbara Herrnstein Smith points out that in systematic repetition "a pattern of recurrence sets up an expectation which, though it is repeatedly fulfilled, is also strengthened with each successive recurrence" (157). Thus, it becomes "more a force for continuation than for closure" (157). Paradoxically, then, the "systematic repetition" in the lives of most of Stead's characters suggests endless repetition beyond the formal termination of the texts so that the very act of closure is subverted. This type of repetition also discloses a narratorial

ideology of character that is immutable, unreedemable and a paradigm for repetitive capitalistic pursuits or for women's state of immobility in such a society, rather than for the progressing achievements of a Horatia or Horatio Alger narrative, a Bildungs plot, or a romantic plot. Characters, in the narrated, are trapped within their own obsessions, and seem doomed to repeat them.

Relevant to an understanding of Stead's characterization is the concept in Freudian analysis of the repetition compulsion in "normal" persons which "gives the impression of a pursuing fate, a daemonic trait in their destiny" ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 149). Freud, himself, is contradictory in this essay, but he suggests that the repetition compulsion serves the death instinct, which is how Stead depicts it. The characters are themselves unaware, repressing any understanding of the repetitions in their lives.

This repetition suggests merely a duplication of earlier experiences of the characters, who exist in a state of inertia, their scripts pre-determined. Only the act of narration progresses, signifying that the solution to this mimetic stasis is through the poetic act itself. Quite obviously in the Kunstlerromanen of Teresa and Louisa their "salvation" lies in the pursuit of writing new texts for themselves and for other women, but the fate of characters in the novels of repetition never incorporates any real sense of creativity.

The narrative of Letty Fox: Her Luck is curious because it seems to embody both endings--that of the Kunstlerroman and the novel of repetition--but, significantly, her ending in marriage

is undermined by the narrative form. Letty Fox, according to a psychoanalyst, has a father fixation: for a price this analyst will rid her of her obsession, promising the ending (in marriage) that she wants, if cured. Letty, for all her modernness, too neatly fits in with the stereotyped roles for women not to see marriage as the holy grail of her quest. Her Bildung is, thus, negated by her desire for marriage; her artistic development atrophies because she considers writing either as a male or a capitalistic pursuit. Letty bitterly remarks to Cornelis de Groot: "'With your pen on my papyrus, you see, you wrote something, you can't wash that out; you can't reason it away with your dry, feathery, insane Dutch reason'" (474). The metaphor is significant for Letty: by depicting the creator as male, the blank page as female, she denies her own potential as an artist. As Susan Gubar has observed in "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity": "When the metaphors of literary creativity are filtered through a sexual lens, female sexuality is often identified with textuality" (294).

Letty consequently is silenced. Unable to write even a short story, she can only manage an anonymous letter to Luke Adams' wife, expressing her hatred of his seductive power and her anger at his sexual freedom. An example of female writing for Letty is Edwige's indecent novel, If I Had the Time and Space, merely a money-making endeavour, blending lewd, pornographic sexuality with entrepreneurship and duplicating Edwige's own life which relegates all men to the position of voyeurs because of her own sexual objectification. Her own narrative suggests a talking

cure, a confession rather than any ability to write creatively.

Marriage is the fate for all women, not creativity, and Letty's uncle suggests only spurious alternative choices for her: Philip hangs himself out of Letty's bathroom window because the "agony and hunger for love is driving [him] mad" (492). She fears she might end up like him, regretting life, and the inability to have the excitement of endless numbers of sexual encounters, but she also considers his death a "fine end." If Jacky's disappearance to Europe to be with her aged lover also suggests death, Letty's other sister, Andrea, has bound herself in sisterhood, which Letty envies, with barely adolescent Anita who has given birth, preferring to bring up the baby without the father. But Letty spurns this independence as well as the love of Jacky which idealizes "chastity, beauty, romance, idealism, self-sacrifice" (473), and ironically, with unhappy marriages and divorces the norm, Letty still cannot envisage any alternative for herself to conformist marriage. Persia, who lives out of wedlock with Solander Fox, feels uneasy about Letty's attitude to her, given the latter's new state of respectability in the forthcoming marriage. Persia says she will be a sister to Letty and adapts the Baudelaire quotation from The Wasteland[2]: "'hypocrite, ma soeur, mon semblable.'" Persia does not want the affianced Letty to misread her life, and judge her as inferior because she is unmarried. Instead, she wants Letty

[2] The correct quotation from Baudelaire, and 'The Burial of the Dead' section of The Wasteland, labels the reader as hypocrite:

'You! hypocrite lecteur!--mon semblable,--mon frere!'

to see the parallels in their states as women subordinate to their men. But Stead never gets Letty to develop beyond what society demanded of her and none of the alternatives to marriage are ideal either: Jacky is too romantic, Letty's mother too self-consciously tragic, and if Anita and Persia's choices seem more bravely alternative, Persia still desires acceptance and Anita shows some perversity in her manipulation of the family who take her in.

Letty seems not to have understood Persia's taunt of "hypocrite." In Letty's perception, her marriage provides a moderately euphoric ending, but the ending of the narrative suggests a finality for her: union with Bill van Week (the name is suggestive of weakness or of a short time) results from their pragmatic decision to marry; although she acknowledges his good looks, she also describes him as a piece of livestock bemoaning his "small eyes," which are "sometimes empty"(498). Dissonance obtains, because a close reading of the narrative form attests to a dysphoric ending. In comparison with Louisa and Teresa, Letty has failed to progress in any sort of Bildung; her luck is no luck because she has experienced no metamorphosis of character. Although Letty is pregnant she fails to project into the future any sense of a new life or a beginning.

Thematically, the narrative is end-stopped, filled with allusions to death and negation. In the deathliness of the sanitarium old people slide towards death, the flowers in the vases are "choking to death" (501); Philip hangs himself; Bill van Week's father dies disinheriting him; Letty and Bill bury

their past "in a common grave" (498). Letty's grandmother not only fails to give her a "suit" of furniture, but neglects even to offer her a cocktail. Though Letty heralds the future, analogy and diction immobilize her: her belief that her "journey has begun" because she is married is undercut by Percival Hogg's journey to Paraguay to set up a colony for the male "martyrs of alimony" (501). The final paragraph of Letty's gnomic comments justifying the means to the end of marriage stresses "self-respect," and considers life "quite a siege" (suggesting the "war" between the sexes). Although she purports not to "think for a moment that this is the end of everything" (502), the paratactic syntax of the "principal thing is I got a start in life, and it's from now on. I have a freight, I cast off, the journey has begun" (502) brings an ironic closure to her narrative as does the ponderous monosyllabic diction.

The narrative has reached its end because Letty's lovers and attempts at marriage provided the momentum. Her marriage story, however, stretches beyond the end of the novel. As systematic repetition has been a structural principle in her life story so her marriage suggests merely a repetition of other quasi-marital relationships in her text. But this recurrence points only to the closure of the marriages in "The Dianas", "The Rightangled Creek" and "Girl from the Beach." Letty, in trying to make the ending positive for her reader, affirms "Well, this is all" but her question (though denied) suggests some anxiety on her part: "I don't ask myself: Will this last?" Similarly, the justification of "I was not always honest, but I had grit, pretty much; what else is there to it?" (502) also suggests an uneasy

engagement with the reader. Thus the novel ends ironically, in the discrepancy between the openness that Letty's discourse attempts to convey and the finality of the form.

Like Letty Fox, the young Eleanor Herbert also demonstrates some rejection of the androcentric norm of the time, that women should be inactive sexually until marriage, but ultimately, like Letty, she conforms by desiring the status and economic stability of marriage. She lives her life needing male approval, viewing any other woman (even her daughter) as competition, and age as an enemy. She never fulfils the passion she felt for Thieme; for her it is enough to desire and to fictionalize the outcome. Unlike Letty, she does experience moments of consciousness and realization which take the form of a spiralling within herself (such as Annis Pratt in Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction noted in Bildungs written by women), but, tragically, she can never move beyond the enthusiasm of female biological space:

> Her heart had begun a great circular thrumming, so it felt. Round and round it gadded, making larger swoops, and her head turned, making larger swoops, as if she were floating, with her large body, round the great dome. Her heart began pounding out hard and real thoughts, like pieces of metal, too; and she heard them, forceful, unanswerable: This is love and he knows it; it would be too strong for me, my life would be carried away into a whirlpool, round and round and down, in the center, lost and gone; I wouldn't want to get out of it, I would lose myself; I'd be swept away; I don't want that. I couldn't live, then all would mean nothing. I can't live like that; what of the past and future? There'd be no meaning to the world or time, but this hour and the future hours with him would break into everything, flooding everything, everything would be washed away: I couldn't stand it, I am not strong enough, I'm too old to go in for it-- (304)

The "great dome" suggests, of course, inner female space recalling Eleanor's earlier concept of her body as a temple, a Taj Mahal, something to be sanctified. Thus she fears her passion, depicted archetypally in water imagery (fittingly the man she fantasizes about is named Paul Waters), but the cadence of the language suggest an orgasmic experience of the "whirlpool, round and round and down, in the center, lost and gone" (304). Tragically, Eleanor's moment of crisis only validates her denial, her negation of "potency" and "passion," although a subsequent moment of consciousness depicts the satisfaction of desire.

> She would sit at her desk with the work before her, doing nothing, merely annotating, reading, and her lifeblood beat fiercer and fiercer in her, till she found herself trembling, as if something stronger than herself had got inside, a turbine which had started out on a long voyage and was now well on its way churning up the shallow waters, satisfied in the deep waters. (307)

Eleanor's pleasure principle does not allow for sexual excitation: this loss of self is too threatening with man as an "intruder," a "god" or a "tyrant." Her dream of coldness, of falling into a crevasse in Tibet, symbolizes her aloof frigidity, resulting from her choice to be a "suburban wife." Stead, through Dr Linda Mack, who has taken on an asexual (rather than an androgynous) persona, which enables her to travel freely through Ladakh to the "forbidden territory," suggests that only by escaping the female biological trap of the "dome" and the female cultural trap of sexual self-objectification can a woman be capable of reaching a territory usually "forbidden."

Dr Mack's active, centrifugal quest ridicules Eleanor's

passive, centripetal, even mechanical self-examination. Ironically, in comparison with Linda Mack's walk through the world, Eleanor's journey is a walk into the city, "each step, each stage seeming like an achievement. She would get to a bus stop and seem to rest; reach a well-known street, pause and feel at rest" (307). The latter has not really changed her script, still talking the suburban, slightly archaic sociolect. Her decision to "take things easier" involves accepting "a life full of work" (308). Dissonance occurs in Eleanor's narrated monologue: work does not constitute life, any more than desire for a male lover, in Eleanor's sense, could lead to a life of regeneration and creativity, but merely one of self-obliteration, paradoxically, in a narcissistic mirror image. Eleanor's decision to write the story of her life does not suggest that she is "capable of writing the novel" as would be the hero who "triumphs over metaphysical desire in a tragic conclusion" (296) discussed by René Girard in Deceit, Desire, and the Novel. The closure of Miss Herbert (The Suburban Wife) lacks tragedy, because Eleanor has never even cherished any metaphysical desires; the only desire she attempts to overcome is the sexual.

The narrative winds down with closural allusions: throughout, Eleanor's life has been constituted by repression and self-censorship, now death and endings recur. Quaideson's death from which she "received nothing" is an ending for Eleanor, particularly as she had no interest in his literary estate. Similarly, her daughter's marriage promotes a recognition of the death of passion in her own life and marriage and Deborah's fate

also suggests closure because she marries out of a fear of a missed opportunity rather than through any anticipation of happiness. This narrative which promised to be a Kunstlerroman has told only of an abortive Bildung. Because Eleanor has never been heroic, repetition has constituted her life of stasis and the narrative ends without closure but lacks narrativity. Her ideology of sexual relationships conveyed to her daughter allows only for Deborah to repeat her mother's pattern in a passionless marriage. Marriage, contracted because it is the norm, again suggests closure in a woman's life and a deathly reiteration of the woman's script: Deborah must now go "a-maying" while Eleanor searches for her younger self in her daughter's mirror. The narrative, too, returns to its origins, closing, as it began, with Dr Linda Mack, who is now absent. Eleanor's final assertion that she will "'write the story of my life; then I will really get down to it; and it will open some eyes'" (308) reflects back to the text itself, highlighting the gap between the extra-diegetic narrator and character, because Eleanor would never have the wisdom and detachment to narrate her life as it has been done.

As all Eleanor's other literary endeavours resulted either in silence or in the editing of her father's text, the lack of her self-development suggests only a repetition of this pattern. The narrator does not offer an overview, allowing Eleanor finally to speak for herself. The syntax is paratactic, the forced monosyllabic diction points to closure, not to a new text. The narrated monologue of "A life full of work--good, good, she had accepted life. She could rest" (308) suggests irony in its

mundanity. Because Eleanor is so lacking in self-awareness and is unable to escape from gender roles, the ending then returns the reader to the attitude of the narrator who shows the irony, detachment, and wisdom in her portrait of Eleanor that the character lacks. Eleanor, held in a state of immobility, is fully contained by the sterility of the form, and the closure points only to a mimetic repetition of her life pattern.

Once again, in Stead's canon, the tragedy of a character's dysphoric ending comes about because of her closed ideology. Eleanor views female sexuality as a dialectic between repression and passionate romance at best, as a non-issue to be subverted into a suburban existence of husband and house at worst.

Elvira in The Beauties and Furies, also bound by her suburban existence, seems more effective in her escape than does Eleanor. Both characters have experiences of some sexual awakening in Paris, but if Eleanor fled from hers, Elvira chooses to go on a journey to France to meet Oliver, her mirror image physically and narcissistically in their duplicated beauty, as well as linguistically in the repetition of some of the letters of their names.

In the subversion of the romance plot Elvira struggles against androcentric norms, repeatedly voicing her anger against the economic system that keeps women in the position of prostitutes to men, and against a suburban marriage that atrophied her development until all that occupied her was domestic details. Ultimately, however, suburbia and the comfort of a sterile marriage reclaim her. Her trip to Paris suggests

merely a spurious development because she had attempted only to exchange the protection of one man for another, and when Oliver proves merely to be a "Brussels sprouts of infidelity" (355) she decides to return to Paul and England. Stead, as usual, parodies the romance plot in Elvira's behaviour and also in the satire on the moon, usually an emblem of romance in Paris.

Stead, ironically, grants this foolish, busy, old moon the power to end the "romantic" plot when, really, Oliver's behaviour is what terminates the relationship. The last we hear directly of Elvira is her laugh as Oliver closes the door after her threat to return to England. Once out of the putative romance plot, Elvira is scripted out of the narrative: she tells Oliver she is "mortified--to death" (354) and she undergoes a narrative death in that the reader only hears subsequently of Elvira through Marpurgo who has visited England. Framed within the male narrative she is still repeating her domesticity and her flirtations with younger men. Still desiring male admiration, she is condemned to a repetition that goes beyond the ending of the novel. Her lack of metamorphosis signifies death; even Oliver observes "'she changes everyone, but changes not'" (372) and her speech reported by Marpurgo abounds with references to "death" and being "finished." Elvira had always portrayed herself as a victim of the system that confers power on men, viewing herself in negative terms as an absence, a creature only made present if desired by a man.

> "You must bear with me, I'm always melancholy. I can't help it! If you turn against me, I have no one. I'm all alone in the world. I had a husband, you separated me from him. I had a child--where is it?" (346)

Stead frames the novel with a train journey at the beginning and the end. Oliver's first letter that Elvira had read on the train to Paris spoke of longing to "wake" her up before the "thorns" interlocked, as though she was a sleeping beauty. Now, for Oliver, on the train himself, this romantic fairytale is parodied: the only ogre is a sleeping man, who snores; the beauty does not sleep, but Oliver rescues her from the sound of the "gurgling snore" by waking up the offending passenger. The girl is no virginal princess to be rescued for, though she purports to believe in "discipline," her body language is seductive. Her actions begin to repeat Oliver's experience with women, his addiction to plots of romance, and the woman's complicity in these plots. Oliver, himself, lacks the consciousness to write another script as he is in oneiric thrall to romance, like Elvira, Coromandel, and Blanche who disappear at the closure of the narrative.

Stead repeats her practice of obliterating women in her narratives, besides Elvira. Their lives negate any possible narrativity. Those seduced not so much by the romance plot as by their desire for marriage and domesticity, because no other "profession" is available to them, disappear: Kitty in For Love Alone, obviously haunted by the possibility of joining the "Great Unwanted," goes off to housekeep for a widower and his son, certain that marriage will result. But her story never reaches closure because she is silenced, written out of the narrative as she has been written out of life, her fate determined by the norms of Sydney society--the "old wives' tale," the "mother's sad sneer" and the "father's admonition" (495). Teresa, having

escaped, feels little sisterhood for her; similarly Peggy, spurned by her sister Nellie, is also written out of the story. Unable to break from traditional female roles of nurturer and domestic worker Peggy plans to get a husband in the only way she knows, by taking in boarders and perpetuating her previous role of housekeeper even though her parents have died and she has cruelly evicted Uncle Simon. In the narratives, Kitty and Peggy are arrested perpetually in a purgatory of searching for a husband. Their stories never completed, they repeat the tales of other women's lives touched on peripherally in For Love Alone and Cotters' England.

The closure to Nellie's narrative is also one of a repetition that goes beyond the ending. The death of George (which takes place at a distance) has little real affect on her life, sterile with obsessions about death. Thus, even when death signifies at the end of the novel, repetition still obtains for the other characters. Similarly, in A Little Tea, A Little Chat, when the narrative ends with Mrs Downs' discovery of Grant's corpse, the final close-up focuses on Mrs Downs herself, whose narrated monologue and her questions "What should she do?" "Suppose she took the hatbox?" (394) are answered when the narrator finishes:

> She got up and looked for some time at the hatbox lurking on Grant's other unused pillow in the double bed he always occupied. After thinking a long while, without touching anything, she rang the police. (394)

Thus, the reader, too, is distanced from Mrs Downs; the details of her final decision and her fate remain a mystery but any

possible expansion of her life can only return to the repetition of living off men, and being exploitable. This woman on her own, animal-like with her "haunches," her "brilliant eyes large and gleaming," will have to re-engage in the competitive life that favours the fittest, though now she is disadvantaged by looking like "a faded working-class forty" (394). Alone and penniless as at the beginning of the narrative, she has gained nothing financially from her liaison with Grant. Like those women who do not change, nor break with androcentric society, her story is circular and repetitious.

Just as the narrator does not transcend this scene in an overview, so neither could Mrs Downs transcend her sordid life-style of corruption, thus remaining trapped in obsessive compulsions to repeat. As in House of All Nations, the narrative is not closed formally or thematically, yet the novel conveys a sense of completion because the ending is congruent with the narrative, the reader having been educated into an understanding, if not an acceptance, of the deterministic view that informs the novel.

Novels of repetition: male characters

Although the discussion has focussed predominantly on closure pertaining to women characters, male characters like Sam Pollit, Robert Grant, or the bankers in House of All Nations also show obsessive behaviour that suggests their own repetition compulsions. The repetitious plot structure of House of All Nations and A Little Tea, A Little Chat and the rigidly static

scenes (one hundred and four in all) of the former suggest a paradigm for the businessmen's frenetic money-making and schemes for power. In both novels characters disappear without any closure; people are mere statistics in these impersonal, competitive economic milieux. The closure of House of All Nations, exceptional in Stead's canon, does not privilege the narrative act. Rather than the themes being held in check by the exigency of the form, they seem to overcome and silence the narrative voice. The narrative is finally reduced to silence, contained, formally, in its final paratactic sentence, and emblematically, in the monosyllabic desperation of the telegram and in the destruction of other texts: the contre-partie books rotting in a London warehouse along with documents pertaining to the bank. The repetition compulsions of the characters in the Bank do not cohere with the systematic repetition evident in the plots pertaining to women characters, which suggest repetition beyond the endings.

Similarly, A Little Tea, A Little Chat is brought to closure for the male character in a way that suggests finality both formally and mimetically. The novel is reduced thematically in a closing down of Grant's life; the final chapter winds down towards his death in the lessening of his virility, the decrease of his business, and in the enclosure of his domesticity with Mrs Downs supervising him as well as the building he lives in. Spatially, his life contracts to the dimensions of the newspapers he reads, the hatbox that he never lets go of, and his shrinking physique "with yellow hanging chops." Living in a world of diminishing sunshine he even gets no more thrill out of "a little

tea, a little chat." Tragically he experiences no metamorphosis, only a realization of his age, mortality and death.

Nor does he develop any conscience, though he had been the death of Myra Coppelius and possibly Laura in Rome. His dreams do not proffer transcendence, only a sinking lower, into the mud. His life had, in fact, ended long before, (at the opening of the narrative) and is defined by negation: he had "no more need for money," "no hobbies," he could not read more than a few sentences in a newspaper, he thought of the past, got bored by "his own real hobby, libertinage" (25). His obsession with death, with Azrael, duplicates his frenetic schemes for money or fame through whatever duplicitous means he can use. Ironically, he dies, as he had feared, with Azrael's knock on the door, literally because of his heart, metaphorically because of the lack of it, with the Sunday supplement in his hand. The newspapers are all that is "fresh-smelling" in his life as he and Mrs Downs become reduced to the caricatures of cartoon figures in states of arrested animation.

In contrast, the ending of The People with the Dogs is exceptional in its thematic and formal openness. Even the Bildungsromanen do not show such lack of closure. The final scene, unconstrained by deathly repetition, celebrates the marriage of Edward and Lydia, replicating the traditional romantic comic ending. Significantly, the marriage has Edward as focalizer, not the female character. Endings and beginnings seem in perfect balance in the last chapter entitled "New Configurations," which thematically closes with a sense of the

family's "natural order" which is utopian. That no dramatic changes have occurred does not convey sterility or repetition as in the other narratives; rather, the Massine republic suggests renovation and regeneration, a necessary counterbalance to the "epoch of wars and revolutions."

The People with the Dogs celebrates community uncritically and, though Edward is the central character, the narrative depicts the family, as well as their dogs, collectively. Even the marriage of two people does not suggest isolation or an exclusion of Edward's tribe by his future nuclear family. Lydia and Edward have transformed the institution of marriage, subverting Walt's earlier comment to Edward "'You'd only understand the communal life, that's why you don't want to marry, isn't it? You don't see the reason for crawling into a corner with one woman and having a child'" (94).

Thematically, the ending expands: the newlyweds are going to a "dream world" to live in the "never-never," a place free from sterile chronological time and legislated, instead, by an aionic, creative time. The day of their marriage is prematurely spring-like; the sunlight falls through the blind, and the children symbolize new life and the future rather than being the tormented individual consciousnesses of those in The Man Who Loved Children. Life and death, meetings and farewells merge organically so that even closural allusions are not end-stopped. After Philip's death, Nell believes "'Philip and I are both living and dead at the same time'" (304). Vera Sarine's farewell to Edward is "delightfully happy" because she looks forward to loving other people in Europe; Big Jenny and Madame X have died

but life continues--though Westfourth is dead other cats in the neighbourhood look like him.

Formal aspects of the ending reiterate this balance of life and death, freed of sterile repetition: the imagery is full of light, colour and burgeoning nature. The word "new" recurs in a "new doggie for Oneida," Edward's "new wife", the planned "new play" with Edward the "new" stage manager. In the gathering of the family there is "no silence or constraint, no impatience and no flurry" (344); the negatives only suggest the positive milieu of noise, love, and openness. No crisis obtains here and this moment connects with others:

> In this moment, as in all others, their long habit and innocent, unquestioning and strong, binding, family love, the rule of their family, made all things natural and sociable with them. (344)

Narratorial tone reveals consonance between narrator and character, and, for the reader, the closure is congruent with the rest of the narrative. The diction shows none of the formal characteristics of closure and the narrative ends with Jonathan beginning a speech, "'Brothers and sisters! We love each other and today is St Valentine's Day'" (345). Repetition of this saint's day would bring ritualistic expressions of love in this family rather than deathly recurrence. This ending is positive and ameliorative, unlike the other endings scripted for male characters, and its marriage ending, too, is transformed.

Bildungsromanen

Louisa in The Man Who Loved Children is one of the exceptional female protagonists in Stead's canon. Like Teresa in For Love Alone, she appears to reject the family romance by escaping from her father's house, and by setting her Bildung and artistic development before any other relationships. Her narrative, fittingly, is open-ended reaching beyond the ending because she is just beginning her journey. Because Louisa has ruptured the bonds with her father and created new ones with her dead mother, her future does not suggest any repetition in a possible return to Spa House but a linear development. The ending for Bonnie in the narrative provides a cautionary tale for Louisa; the former's script was merely "the same old story" that Louisa had complained about sotto voce as Sam welcomes back his erring sister in a scene presented ironically as redolent of the moral ending of a Victorian text (516-17). Stead does not script such an ending for Louisa; any return to Sam's "great phalanstery of sons" (517) could only betoken death for her, as it did for Henny.

Louisa is obviously active in her own liberation by ridding herself of the constraints of her stepmother, and she experiences a rebirth, freed by Henny's death. This rite of passage emanates from a dreadful collusion with the dead Henny.

> But sometimes, when she least expected it, she would think about it: the terror of it, and her secret complicity would seem so naked to the sky that she would break out into an icy sweat and wonder that no one would hear what was going on in her brain. She would never tell anyone, and this was as a corpse sealed up in the house which she alone knew of and

> which would eventually moulder and leave little trace, until the mindless years, with the vague gesture of an idiot, brought it unaccusingly to light. This was a terror she could live with. But she lived a queer life, and the noises, cries, philosophies of others seemed like silly games that kindergarten children play. She was on the other side of a fence; there was a garden through the chinks that she had once been in, but could never be in again. Yet she did not care. She still believed that she had done the only right thing, the only firm thing, and that Fate itself had not only justified her but saved her from consequences. (514)

With this childhood paradise behind her forever, she quests beyond Spa House, negating her father's desire for censorship. Sam had promised to take her away from "all this foolery, this drama and poetry and nonsense they are putting into your head" and "to watch every book" she read, "every thought" she had (520). She experiences her escape from Spa House as transcendental, "like the morning of the world, that hour before all other hours which Thoreau speaks of, that most matinal hour" (522). Similarly, in leaving her lumpish adolescent body behind to feel "light as a dolphin undulating through the waves" (522) she aspires to a freedom of spirit that suggests the metaphysical.

That Louisa is a hero able to break with her family responsibilities and the patriarchal strictures that threaten to silence her has implications for the narrative form of this novel. In this Bildungsroman, the heroic impulses of Louisa's consciousness suggest centrifugal movement which might be contained by the closural demands of the form but not negated by it. The closure of this novel is uncharacteristic in Stead's canon because she is implicitly acknowledging an impulse towards

transcendence.

Within the form, closural allusions to death and reconciliation abound; the narrative is framed by Henny coming home to her offspring, ending with Louisa leaving home to attain her artistic development. But if Louisa's statements derive from the negative "'I won't see Miss Aiden any more, will I?'" "'No, I won't. I'll never come back'" (523), her questions interrogate this negativity. She asks Clare "'You won't come? . . . Why not? . . . Why don't you come, Clare?'" (522). Her journey and her negation, paradoxically, suggest the positive: "as for going back towards Spa House, she never even thought of it" (523). Even the paratactic style and monosyllabic diction of the final sentences which suggest closure do not limit or negate Louisa's quest:

> She pictured Ernie, Evie, the twins, darling Tommy, who loved the girls already and loved her, too; but as for going towards Spa House, she never even thought of it. Spa House was on the other side of the bridge. (523)

The close-up ending is congruent with the heroic portrayal of Louisa, and if the diction reveals closural aspects, these do not limit Louisa's Bildung. Thus the ideology of narrative form and the narrated achieve coherence.

The ending of For Love Alone, however, is more problematic. Teresa is, of course, the other heroic quester in Stead's canon. Like Louisa's, her life journey seems solitary, but she does experience a vision of community with other women, feeling "many thousands of shadows, pressing along with her, storming forwards, but quietly and eagerly though blindly" (494). Depicted in mythic and oneiric terms, her quest, like Eleanor's, seems

peculiar to a woman's experience as "it was from the womb of time she was fighting her way and the first day lay before her" (494). Her consciousness here suggests a metaphysical component just as did Louisa's. The railway journey back to Quick seemed "divine, easy and clear, as if she had a passport to paradise" (494). In the narrative, the romance plot is partially subverted, very obviously in the earlier cameo of Erskine who treats Teresa as a courtly lady, worshipping her with flowers when, in her poverty, her need is for food, and more generally, of course, in her relationship with Crow. If, in London, Teresa behaves like the detached "la belle dame sans merci," keeping Quick and Girton in her thrall, she does define a different kind of "woman's love" from the one that Quick had hoped for, "the intensely passionate, ideal, romantic love of famous love affairs" (459) progressing beyond the dicta of romance in her preference for a multi-faceted love that is "pervasive, strong, intellectual and physical" (459). Piratical in her explorations of different kinds of love, she overcomes her past self-sacrificial obsession for Jonathan Crow.

Significantly, the ending of For Love Alone appears to rewrite the romantic plot for Teresa by celebrating her stable "domestic" love for Quick over her passion for Girton. Stead does not have her character choose to travel to Spain to live in Hemingway-type bliss with a heroic soldier of the Civil War; instead, Teresa remains in England with the menial job of typing manuscripts, with the security of her "unselfish" duty to James Quick, with her belief in him "like the hope of a child" (497), with her passion for Harry Girton that must always remain secret,

and with the possibility that she will write (perhaps from the visionary understanding of the position of other women). In Stead's canon this ending suggests an ideal solution to the tyrannies of the romance plot; because the woman protagonist transforms passion or romance into a means of self-fulfilment, not self-obliteration, into "honey" to bring back to her stable, almost familial relationship with her "husband." Men are a means of experience not ends in themselves as they were for Eleanor, Elvira, or Letty. Teresa plans to go beyond both men in her Bildung:

> And suddenly as a strange thought it came to her, that she had reached the gates of the world of Girton and Quick and that it was towards them she was only now journeying, and in a direction unguessed by them; and it was towards them and in this undreamed direction that she had been travelling all her life, and would travel, farther, without them. (494)

The protagonist's quest that stretches into the future suggests narrativity and a linear open-endedness to For Love Alone (as it did in The Man Who Loved Children) but this mythic mode is more acutely interrogated by contingent details: Teresa's heroic quest is reduced and contained by the emblematic repetition inherent in the final scene. The grotesque figure of the old beggar-man and his "parasite" suggest sinister possibilities for interaction based on dependence and Teresa's encounter with Jonathan Crow, depicted in images of darkness, recalls her relationship with him. Jonathan still reads woman as signifying the predatory: "feeling himself followed and by a woman, [he] turned quickly and viciously, darting a fierce

repellent glance at the woman behind, whom he supposed to be a whore" (501). Sexual politics have not been transformed as Teresa acknowledges in her bitter comment "'It's dreadful to think that it will go on being repeated for ever, he--and me! What's there to stop it?'" (502). These final words of the novel point to a repetition of the sacrificial romance plot. Although Teresa may have ostensibly progressed beyond the usual plots scripted for women, other women have not.

Even Teresa's script has not been entirely rewritten, emphasizing the irony of her "'I am thinking I am free'" (496). Too brashly optimistic, she is only thinking she is free: she still has to conceal the true nature of her Bildung, and her discovery of passion, from Quick. Her moment of consciousness after the love-making with Girton suggests a tempered freedom: the entelechy of "Today put on perfection and a woman's name" (490) is too female, undermined by her withdrawal into an "inner room of herself" where she "found the oracle of her life, this secret deity which is usually sealed from us" (490). This inner, female space, never entirely positive in Stead's narratives, has bars on the window. The narrator seems to suggest that withdrawal into biological female enclosures has its limitations, but if this essentialism is questioned, the romance plot, subverted in terms of genre, remains uninterrogated by the romantic depiction of the metaphysical nature of Teresa's passion for Girton. Teresa's belief that "[e]ven when my mind closes for ever, this absolute love must somehow go on" (490) betrays neither narratorial dissonance, nor irony. Teresa's experience with Harry is numinous, suggesting that any subsequent act of

passion will return to this perfection repeating in a "Platonic" sense what has gone before, revealing, too, a narratorial desire for the transcendence of romance.

Teresa's romance and heroism, however, are tempered, as I have shown, by the deterministic frame of the final scene. Unlike that of Louisa, Teresa's quest is contained--by the horror of meeting Jonathan Crow and by her realization of other women's repetition. The form, too, is enclosing--the monosyllabic diction and the staccato conversation, although the negativity of Teresa's "'I can't believe I ever loved that man'" seems neutralized by Quick's reply "'You never did'" (502). Teresa's final rhetorical question about relationships between men and women, "'What's there to stop it?'" (502) signifies a despair and universality that the ending of The Man Who Loved Children did not acknowledge, so that Teresa's quest is, largely, held in check by the finality of the formal closure, and the intimation of the broader mimetic repetition of other women.

Conclusion

The endings to Stead's novels generally show a formal closure, such as Alice Jardine noted as a characteristic of women's writing. Yet an "ideological negotiation" occurs between the narrative form and the narrated: though poetically the novels, with the exception of The People with the Dogs and the qualified exceptions of the Bildungsromanen, attain closure, mimetically they tend to be open-ended. Throughout Stead's canon

a tension recurs between the desire for formal closure and the desire to depict lives of women which continue beyond the ending, whether it be in the regenerative possibility of Bildung or in the deathly compulsion to repeat their life patterns. Thus the texts of the female heroes or anti-heroes do not end in a state of quiescence, but suggest narrativity.

Only in the genre of the Bildungsroman, however, which takes cognizance of the development of the artist, does Stead suggest an ending which acknowledges a sense of arrival. The linear form progresses beyond the ending in a very different way from the novels of repetition. In these novels of Bildung, Stead, in acknowledging the archetype of the hero whose journey is both metonymic and metaphoric, earthly and metaphysical, drops her pessimistic, ironic stance for some appreciation of a romantic, utopian potential. This desire for the utopian, as I argued in the chapter on metaphor, is a strong impulse in the narratives, deterministic and pessimistic though they might appear initially. Thus, although Stead may conform to the symbolic order of the Father by enclosing the text within a form, she subverts this tendency by writing beyond the ending.

Epilogue

To read Christina Stead with the emphasis on narrative and gender is to return always to the Ur-narratives of Louisa Pollit and Teresa Hawkins, and, to a lesser extent, those of Eleanor Herbert and Catherine Baguenault. Teresa and Louisa are, of course, autobiographical figures and through them Stead explores the dilemmas of the woman artist in an androcentric social formation. Stead, I would argue, is most engaged in her texts when she is writing about these women's scripts, and the novels are shaped accordingly. Only when these characters react against their acculturation of gender is transformation possible within characterization and narrative form.

The other novels (those I have termed novels of repetition in their depiction of characters who neurotically repeat the patterns of their lives) suggest that the acculturation of competitive behaviour and gender differences immobilize character and negate any progression in plot. Because these characters tend to be alienated from the reader by the narrative modes, Stead, rather than foregrounding character, lays emphasis more on the socialization that has rigidified these male and female characters into deathly, compulsive patterns. In an interview with John B. Beston, Stead maintained that she was primarily a character-writer but conceded, if guardedly: "'It's true that people's lives are affected by the society they live in and by their economic background, but I don't think in terms of social problems, only people'" (89). Despite this assertion, she was a character-writer who situated her characters within a specific

social context.

Stead always depicted her characters within a narrative style the essence of which, as she herself believed, was experiment and change. Thus narrative form, as I have shown, becomes a correlative of the constraints a woman character experiences within fictional norms. The narrative subtexts also reveal Stead's subversive position as a woman writer within the dominant literary tradition that endorses such norms. To read narrative form as an ideological inscription of her gender is to encounter a Christina Stead very different from the writer criticized and reviewed from a masculist bias, one who can be read in the context of those other women writers who also interrogate the male symbolic in the plots of their stories and in their use of language.

Throughout her canon, Christina Stead very definitely writes against the Law of the Father. In her early life she experienced narrative as a male prerogative because it was her father who told her stories after her mother had died. This dynamic of story-telling metaphorically duplicates the lives of women, generally. Relegated to the position of silent narratee, they lack a mother who is absent either in her death or in her silence. Stead's narratives alternate between these parents. The repressed discourses reveal a desire to reconstruct instinctual links with the mother through metaphoric language and a desire to deconstruct male discourse. Stead never accepted the script she was handed, and continued to interrogate paternal metaphor in all her novels, but as she herself maintained in

"Another View of the Homestead": "Well, let us be discontented then; it has never hurt art" (18).

Another Christina Stead, who moved beyond discontentment, also existed: the quasi-visionary whose narratives attest in subtexts to utopian desires for community or romantic love and who believed, too, that the "story has a magic necessary to our happiness" ("Ocean of Story", 93). In the same essay she voices her desires for the ultimate clarity in narrative:

> And the belief that life is a dream and we the dreamers only dreams, which comes to us at strange, romantic, and tragic, moments, what is it but a desire for the great legend, the powerful story rooted in all things which will explain life to us and, understanding which, the meaning of things can be threaded through all that happens? Then there will no longer be a dream, but life in the clear. (183)

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